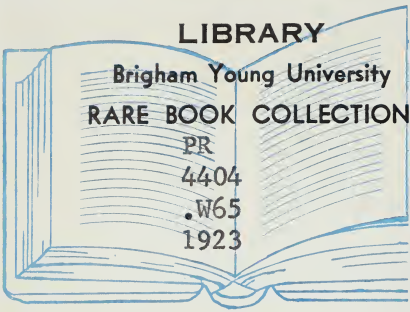
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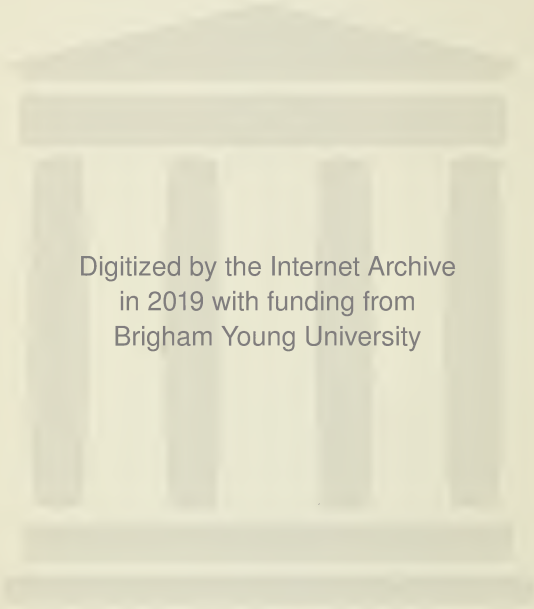
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THE WOMAN OF KNOCKALOE

SIR HALL CAINE'S NOVELS

THE MASTER OF MAN.
THE WOMAN THOU GAVEST ME.
THE WHITE PROPHET.
THE PRODIGAL SON.
THE ETERNAL CITY.
THE CHRISTIAN.
THE MANXMAN.
THE SCAPEGOAT.
THE BONDMAN.
THE DEEMSTER.
THE SHADOW OF A CRIME.

THE WOMAN OF KNOCKALOE

A Parable

By

HALL CAINE

"Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave; . . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LTD.
London, New York, Toronto & Melbourne

First published 1923

Printed in Great Britain

UPB

The Publishers wish it to be understood that nothing in this book is intended to refer to real-life persons in the Isle of Man or elsewhere.

"I cannot but regard with warm respect and admiration the conduct of one who, holding Hall Caine's position as an admired and accepted novelist, stakes himself on so bold a protestation on behalf of the things which are unseen, as against those which are seen and are so terribly effective in chaining us down to the level of our earthly existence."

—W. E. GLADSTONE.

EDITORIAL NOTE

By Newman Flower

For the publication of this book I am, perhaps, chiefly responsible, and in that fact I find my excuse for the following Editorial Note. Hall Caine had not intended to publish the story. He wrote it, as he explains, solely for the relief of his own feelings at thought of the present lamentable condition of the world. Accident led to my seeing the manuscript several months after it had been written, when nothing was being done with it or was likely to be done. I read it with very deep emotion and advised its publication—its immediate publication. Therefore I accept whatever responsibility there may be for the publication of this book, but the reader will see that the greater courage is that of the Author who has consented to risk temporary misrepresentation and perhaps serious personal hostility for the sake of what he believes to be the Truth and the Right.

"The Woman of Knockaloe" is first of all a love story. In my opinion it is a charming and natural love story, beautiful in its purity, and irresistible in its human appeal; so simple in its incidents that it might be a nursery tale, so stark in its telling that it might be a Saga, so inevitable in the march of its scenes, from its almost breathless beginning to its tremendous end, that it might be a Greek tragedy. In this character alone I think it calls for serious consideration.

But it is more than a love story. It is a parable, carrying an unmistakable message, an ostensible argument. Readers all over the world will so interpret it. They will see that it has special application to the times, that it is directed against War as the first author of the racial hatred, the material ruin, the sorrow and suffering, the poverty and want, which are now threatening the world with destruction; that it is a plea for universal peace, for speedy and universal disarmament, as the only alternative to universal anarchy.

The story is laid in a little backwater of the war—a backwater which has never before, perhaps, been explored in literature—but never-

theless it is not in the ordinary sense a war story. The late Great War does not enter it at all, except as an evil wind which blows over a mile and a half by half a mile of land in a small island in the Irish Sea, an Internment Camp, wherein twenty-five thousand men and one woman, cut off from life, pass four and a half years within an enclosure of barbed wire.

This narrow space of blackened earth is intended to stand for the world in little, from 1914 to the present year, and the few incidents of the simple yet poignant tale are meant to illustrate the effect of the late war on the heart of humanity, to describe at very close quarters the consequences of what we call The Peace on the condition of the world and the soul of mankind, and to point to what the author believes to be the only hope of saving both from the spiritual and material suicide to which they are hurrying on. It is neither pro-British nor pro-German in sympathy, but purely pro-human. War itself is the only enemy the parable is intended to attack.

The battlefield the author has chosen is dangerous ground, but the public will not question his sincerity. Hall Caine is seventy

years of age, and down to 1914 he was a life-long and even an extreme pacifist. More than one of his best known books was intended to show not only the barbarity and immorality of warfare, but also its cowardice and futility. Yet when the Great War broke out no man of letters became more speedily or remained more consistently an advocate of the Allied cause. The paradox is not difficult of explanation. In the face of what he, in common with countless pre-war pacifists, believed to be a deliberate plot whereby liberty was to be violated, civilization was to be outraged, religion was to be degraded, the right was to be wronged, the weak were to be oppressed, the helpless were to be injured, and before the iron arm of a merciless military tyranny, justice and mercy and charity were to be wiped out of the world, he became one of the most passionate supporters of the war of resistance. The Great War stood to him, as to others, as a war to end war.

It cannot be necessary to describe in detail his war activities even at a moment when, by the publication of this challenging book, his patriotism may possibly be questioned. They are matters of common knowledge not only in

Great Britain and America, but also in many foreign countries in which his books have made his name known and his opinions respected. For his war services he was honoured by his own nation, and at least one of her Allies, being knighted in 1918, made an Officer of the Order of Leopold in 1920, and a Companion of Honour in 1922.

But the war-propagandist never wholly submerged the pacifist. His last war article was written on Armistice Day, 1918, and it was intended to show that while the price paid for the victory of the Allied cause had been a terribly bitter one it had been justified, inasmuch as it had killed warfare, and so banished from the earth for ever the greatest scourge of mankind.

Hall Caine has lived long enough since to see the falseness of that judgment. No one can have suffered more from the disappointments and disillusionment of the war, its political uselessness, its immeasurable cruelty, its limitless waste, its widespread wretchedness, and above all its inhuman demoralization. That the Great War has been in vain, that so much sacrifice, so much heroism, so many brave young lives have been thrown away, he would not for

one moment say, being sure that in the long review of a mysterious Providence all these must have their place. But he is none the less sure that the late war has left the world worse than it found it; that the after-war, which we call The Peace, has been more productive of evil passions than the war itself was; that violence has never been more rampant or faith in the sanctity of life so low; that the poor have never been poorer, or the struggle to live so severe; and that Christian Europe has never before been such a chaos of separate and selfish interests or so full of threats of renewed and still deadlier warfare in the future—in a word that the Great War has not only failed to kill war but has frightfully strengthened and inflamed the spirit of it.

And now he publishes his parable, the little story called "The Woman of Knockaloe," in the hope of showing that there can be "no peace under the soldier's sword," that the salvation of the world from the moral and material destruction which threatens to overwhelm it is not to be found in governments or parliaments or peace conferences, but only in a purging of the heart of individual man of

the hatreds and jealousies and other corruptions which the war created—in a personal return of all men, regardless of nation or race, or politics or creed, or (as in the case of the American people) remoteness from the central scene of strife, to the spiritual and natural laws which alone can bring the human family back to true peace and real security—the laws of love and mutual sacrifice, above all the law of human brotherhood, which was at once the law and the first commandment of Christ.

That this is a great Evangel none can doubt, and that it will go far in the beautiful human form in which it is presented, that of a deeply moving story, few will question. But is the world prepared for it? Is this the hour for such a plea? Is the Great War too recent to permit any of the nations who engaged in it to forgive their enemies? In this new book Hall Caine touches upon wounds that are not yet healed and sometimes the touch hurts. If it is an all-healing touch the pain may be endured. But is it? What will the British people think? What will the Belgians, the French and the Americans, who are still suffering from their bereavements, say to a writer

who asks them, in effect, to shake hands with the Germans who caused them? Will not the nations which have suffered most from the war say that, having beaten the Germans, it is their first duty to themselves and to humanity to keep them beaten? Will not a residue of bitterness against an author who calls upon the peoples of the world to make an effort that is impossible to the human heart at such a time obscure the sublimity of his message?

On the other hand will it not be agreed that the Christian ideal of the forgiveness of injuries and the brotherhood of man is the only remaining hope of the redemption of the world from the lamentable condition into which the war, and the passions provoked by the war, have plunged it; that without this ideal, politics are a meaningless mockery, religion is an organized hypocrisy, and the churches are a snare, and that, however hard it may be to learn the lesson, and however cruel the pain of it, there never was a time when it was more needed than now?

Here lies the theme for many a sermon, and judging of "The Woman of Knockaloe" by its effect upon those who, besides myself, have

read it, it is hardly possible to question its missionary value, apart from its human beauty and charm. At least it is certain that readers in many lands will think and continue to think of some of the greatest of human problems long after they have closed the book.

Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,
It hath not been my use to pray
With moving lips or bended knees,
But silently, by slow degrees,
My spirit I to love compose,
In humble trust mine eyelids close,
With reverential resignation.
No wish conceived, no thought exprest,
Only a sense of supplication,
A sense o'er all my soul imprest
That I am weak, yet not unblest,
Since in me, round me, everywhere
Eternal Strength and Wisdom are.

But yester-night I prayed aloud,
In anguish and in agony,
Upstarting from the fiendish crowd
Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me:
A lurid light, a trampling throng,
Sense of intolerable wrong,
And whom I scorned, those only strong:
Thirst of revenge, the powerless will
Still baffled, and yet burning still!
Desire with loathing strangely mixed
On wild and hateful objects fixed,
Fantastic passions! maddening brawl!
And shame and terror over all!

COLERIDGE.

INTRODUCTORY

I should like to say, for whatever it may be worth in excuse and explanation, that the following story, in all its essential features, came to me in a dream on a night of disturbed sleep early in December, 1922. *Awakening in the grey dawning with the dream still clear in my mind, I wrote it out hastily, briefly, in the present tense, without any consciousness of effort, not as a smooth and continuous tale, but in broken scenes, now vague, now vivid, just as it seemed to pass before me.*

Only then did I realize, first, that my dream contained incidents of actual occurrence which had quite faded from my conscious memory; next, that it could not claim to be otherwise true to the scene of it; and finally, that it was in the nature of a parable which expressed, through the medium of a simple domestic tale, the feelings which had

long oppressed me on seeing that my cherished hope of a blessed Peace that should wipe out war by war and build up a glorious future for mankind, had fallen to a welter of wreck and ruin.

There were reasons why I should not put aside an urgent task and write out my dream into a story, and other reasons why I should not attempt to publish anything that was so much opposed to the temper of the time, but I had *to write it for the relief of my own feelings, and here it is written. And now I publish it with many misgivings and only one expectation—that in the present troubled condition of the world, in the midst of the jealousy and hatred, the suffering and misery of the nations, which leave them groaning and travailing in pain, and heading on to an apparently inevitable catastrophe, even so humble and so slight a thing as this may perhaps help the march of a moving Providence and the healing of the Almighty hand.*

"*It was a dream. Ah, what is not a dream?*"

FIRST CHAPTER

KNOCKALOE[1] is a large farm on the west of the Isle of Man, a little to the south of the fishing town of Peel. From the farmstead I can see the harbour and the breakwater, with the fishing boats moored within and the broad curve of the sea outside.

There is a ridge of hills that separates the farm from the coast, which is rocky and precipitous. On the crest of the hills there is a square tower that is commonly called "Corrin's Folly," and at the foot of the tower there is a small graveyard surrounded by a stone wall.

Too far inland to hear the roar of the sea except in winter, it is near enough to feel its salt breath in the summer. Not rich or leafy or luxuriant, but with a broad sunny bare-

[1] Pronounced Knock-a-loe.

ness as of a place where a glacier has been and passed over, and with a deep peace, a glacial peace, always lying on it—such is Knockaloe.

The farm-house lies in the valley, close under the shelter of the hills. It is a substantial building with large outhouses, and it is approached from the road by a long, straight, narrow lane that is bordered by short trees.

The farmer is Robert Craine, a stalwart old man in a sleeve waistcoat. I seem to know him well. He has farmed Knockaloe all his life, following three or four generations of his family. But now he is a little past his best, and rarely goes far from home except on Sundays to one or other of the chapels round about, for he is a local preacher among the Wesleyans.

"I'm not too good at the farming now," he says, "but, man, I love to preach."

His wife is dead, and she is buried in the churchyard of Kirk Patrick, which lies near

his gate at the turn of the road to the railway station. He has a son and a daughter. The son, another Robert, but commonly called Robbie, is a fine young fellow with clear flashing eyes, about six and twenty, as fresh as the heather on the mountains, and his father's right-hand man. The daughter is named Mona, and she is a splendid girl of about twenty-three or four, distinctly good-looking, tall, full-bosomed, strong of limb, even muscular, with firm step and upright figure, big brown eyes and coal-black hair—a picture of grown-up health. Since her mother's death she has become "the big woman" of the farm, managing everything and everybody, the farm-servants of both sexes, her brother and even her father.

Mona has no sweetheart, but she has many suitors. The most persistent is heir to the cold and "boney" farm which makes boundary with Knockaloe. They call him "long John Corlett," and his love-making is as crude as his figure.

"Wouldn't it be grand if we only had enough cattle between us to run milk into Douglas?"

Mona reads him like a book and sends him about his business.

Knockaloe has a few fields under cultivation (I see some acres of oats and wheat), but it is chiefly a grazing farm, supplying most of the milk for the people of Peel. At six in the morning the maids milk the cows, and at seven Mona drives the milk into town in a shandry that is full of tall milk-cans.

It is Sunday morning in the early part of August, nineteen hundred and fourteen. The sun has risen bright and clear, giving promise of another good day. Mona is driving out of the gate when she hears the crack of a rocket from the rocket-house connected with the lifeboat. She looks towards the sea. It lies as calm as a sleeping child, and there is not a ship in sight anywhere. What does it mean?

A cock is crowing in the barn-yard, Robbie's dog is barking among the sheep on the hill, the bees are humming in the hedges of yellow gorse and the larks are singing in the blue sky. There is no other sound except the rattle of the shandry in which the fine girl, as fresh as the morning, stands driving in the midst of her pails, and whistling to herself as she drives.

On reaching Peel she sees men in the blue costume of the naval reserve bursting out of their houses, shouting hurried adieux to their wives and children, and then flying off with cries and laughter in the direction of the railway station.

"What's going on?" asks Mona of one of the wives.

"Haven't you heard, woman? It's the war! Mobilization begins to-day, and four steamers are leaving Douglas"—the chief port of the island—"to take the men to their ships."

"And who are we going to war with?"

"The Germans, of course."

Germany has jumped on Belgium—the big brute on the little creature, and the men are going to show her how to mend her manners.

"They will, too," says Mona.

They will give the Germans a jolly good thrashing and then the war will soon be over. She has always hated the Germans—she hardly knows why. May they get what they deserve this time!

Back at Knockaloe she finds Robbie visibly excited.

"You've heard the news, then?"

"I have that."

"They'll be calling you boys off the land next."

"Will they? Do you think they will, girl?"

Robbie's black eyes are glistening. He looks round on the fields near the house. They are yellow and red; the harvest will soon be over, and then. . . .

It is a fortnight later. There is high commotion in the island. Kitchener has put out his cry: "Your King and Country need you." It is posted up on all the walls and printed in the insular newspapers. Young men from the remotest parts are hurrying off to the recruiting stations. Mona and Robbie are at work in the harvest fields. Mona cannot contain her excitement.

"Oh, why am I not a man?"

"Would you go yourself, girl?"

"Wouldn't I just," says Mona, throwing up her head.

The corn is cut and stooked; nothing remains but to stack it. Robbie has gone into town for the evening. Mona and her father are indoors. The old man is looking grave. He remembers the Crimean war and its consequences.

"Robbie is getting restless," he says.

"What wonder?" says Mona.

Suddenly, like a whirlwind, Robbie dashes into the house.

"I've joined up, dad! I've joined up, Mona!"

Mona flings her arms about his neck and kisses him. The old man says little, and after a while he goes up to bed.

A few days pass. It is the evening of Robbie's departure. The household (all except Robbie) are at tea in the kitchen—the old man at the top of the long table, the maids and men-servants at either side of it, and Mona serving, according to Manx custom. Robbie comes leaping downstairs in his khaki uniform. Mona has never before seen her brother look so fine.

"Good-bye all! Good-bye!"

Mona goes down to the gate with Robbie, linking arms with him, walking with long strides and talking excitedly. He is to kill more and more Germans. The dirts! The scoundrels! Oh, if she could only go with him!

There is a joyful noise of men tramping

on the high road. A company of khaki-clad lads on their way to the station come down from a mining village on the mountain, with high step, singing their "Tipperary."

Robbie falls in, and Mona watches him until he turns the corner by Kirk Patrick and the trees have hidden him. Then she goes slowly back to the house. Her father, with a heavy heart, has gone to bed. God's way is on the sea, and His path is on the great deep.

Two months have passed. Mona is managing the farm splendidly and everything is going well. About once a week there is a post-card from Robbie. At first the post-cards are playful, almost jubilant. War is a fine old game, a great adventure; he is to be sent to the front soon. Later there are letters from Robbie, and they are more serious. But nobody is to trouble about him. He is all right. They will lick

these rascals before long and be home for Christmas.

Every night after supper the old man sits by the fire and reads aloud to the household from an English newspaper, never before having read anything except his Bible and the weekly insular paper.

There are hideous reports of German atrocities in Belgium. Mona is furious. Why doesn't God hunt the whole race of wild beasts off the face of the earth? She would if she were God. The old man is silent. When the time comes to read the chapter from the Gospels he cannot do so, and creeps off to bed. Dark is the way of Providence. Who shall say what is meant by it?

The winter is deepening. It is a wild night outside. The old man is reading a report of shocking treachery in London. Germans, whom the English people had believed to be loyal friends and honest

servants, have turned out to be nothing but spies. There has been a Zeppelin raid over London, and, though no lives have been lost, it is clear that Germans have been giving signals.

"Why doesn't the Government put them all in prison?" says Mona. "Yes, every one of them. The hypocrites! The traitors! The assassins!"

The old man, who had opened the Bible, closes it, and goes upstairs.

"You're hard, woman, you're hard," he says.

SECOND CHAPTER

CHRISTMAS has gone; the spring has come; the seed is in the ground; the cattle are out on the hill after their long winter imprisonment in the cow-houses; but the war is still going on and Robbie has not yet returned home.

It is a bright spring morning. Mona is coming back from Peel in her shandry when she sees three gentlemen walking over the farm with her father, one of them in officer's uniform, the other two in silk hats and light overcoats.

As she turns in at the gate she sees a fourth gentleman come down from the hillside and join them in the lane. He wears a Norfolk jacket, has a gun under his arm and two or three dogs at his heels. Mona recognizes the fourth gentleman as their landlord,

and as she drives slowly past she hears her father say to him:

"But what about the farm, sir, when the war is over?"

"Don't trouble about that," says the landlord. "You are here for life, Robert —you and your children."

Mona puts up her horse and goes into the house, and when the gentlemen have gone her father comes in to her. With a halting embarrassment he tells her what has happened. One of the gentlemen had been the Governor of the island, the strangers had been officials from the Home Office.

"It seems the Government in London have come to your opinion, girl."

"What's that?" says Mona.

"That the civilian Germans must be interned."

"Interned? What does that mean?"

"Shut up in camps to keep them out of mischief."

"Prison camps?"

"That's so."

"Serve them right, the spies and sneaks! But why did the gentlemen come here?"

"The Governor brought them. He thinks Knockaloe is the best place in the island for an internment camp."

Mona is aghast.

"What? Those creatures! Are we to be turned out of the farm for the like of them?"

"Not that exactly," says the old man, and he explains the plan that had been proposed to him by the gentlemen from London. He and his family are to remain in the farm-house and keep that part of the pasture land that lies on the hill-side in order to provide the fresh milk that will be required for the camp.

Mona is indignant.

"Do you mean that we are to work to keep alive those Germans whose brothers are killing our boys in France? Never! Never in this world."

Her father must refuse. Of course he must. The farm is theirs—for as long as the lease lasts, anyway.

"Tell the Governor to find some other place for his internment camp."

The old man explains that he has no choice. What the Government wants in a time of war it must have.

"Very well," says Mona; "let them have the farm and we'll go elsewhere."

The old man tells her that he must remain. He is practically conscripted.

"They don't want *me*, though, do they?"

"Well, yes, they do. They are not for having other women about the camp, but under the circumstances they must have one woman anyway."

"It won't be me, then. Not likely!"

The old man pleads with the girl. Is she going to leave him alone?

"Me growing old, too, and Robbie at the war!"

At length Mona consents. She will remain for her father's sake, but she hates the thought of living in the midst of Germans and helping to provide for them.

"It will be worse than being at the war —a thousand times worse."

It is a fortnight later. Huge wagons, full of bricks and timber and other building materials, with vast rolls of barbed wire, have been arriving at the farm, and a multitude of bricklayers and carpenters have been working all day long and half the night. Ugly stone-paved paths have been cut through the green fields; the grass-grown lane from the farm-house to the high road has been made into a broad bare avenue; gorse-covered hedges, already beginning to bloom, have been torn down, and long rows of hideous wooden booths have been thrown up and then tarred and pitched on their faces and roofs. It has been like magic—black magic, Mona calls it.

Already a large area on the left of the avenue, encompassed by double lines of barbed wire, which look like cages for wild beasts, is ready for occupation. It is called Compound Number One.

Mona is now the only woman on the land, the maids being dismissed, and men and boys employed to take their places. The last of the girls to go is a pert young thing from Peel. Her name is Liza Kinnish, and before the war she used to make eyes at Robbie. Now that other men are to come she wants to remain, but Mona packs her off with the rest.

It is evening. Mona hears the whistle of the last train pulling up in the railway station, and a little later the cadenced tramp, tramp, tramp, as of an advancing army on the high road.

It is the first of the Germans. From the door of the house she looks at them as they come up the avenue—a long procession of men in dark civilian clothes, marching in

double file, with a thinner line of British soldiers on either side of them. Mona shudders. She thinks they look like a long black serpent.

Next morning from the window of her bedroom Mona sees more of them. They are a sullen-looking lot, but generally well-dressed and with a certain air of breeding. On going towards the cow-house she speaks to one of the guard. He tells her they are the best she is likely to see. Many of them are well-to-do men. Some are rich, and have been carrying on great businesses in London and living in large houses and even mansions. Later she hears from her father that they are grumbling about their quarters and the food provided for them.

"Let them," she says. "They deserve no better."

In a half-hearted way the old man excuses them. After all they are prisoners, cut off from their wives and children.

"Well, and what worse off are they than

our men who are fighting at the front? The hypocrites! The traitors!"

"You're hard, woman, you're hard," says the old man.

It is another fortnight later. The black magic has been going on as before, and Compound Number Two, on the right of the avenue, is ready for occupation.

At the same hour in the evening Mona hears the tramp, tramp, tramp, as of another army coming up the high road. It is the second company of the Germans, and they are a hundredfold worse-looking than the first. A coarse, dirty, brutal lot, some of them in rags—sailors, chiefly, who have been captured at the docks in Liverpool and Glasgow and in certain cases taken off ships at sea. But they are all in high spirits, or pretend to be so. They come up the avenue laughing, singing and swearing.

Mona is standing at the door to look at them. They see her, address her with coarse

pleasantries which she does not understand, and finally make noises with their lips as if they were kissing her. She turns indoors.

"The scum! The beasts!" she says.

"You're hard, woman, you're hard," says the old man.

A month later Compound Number Three is ready, and once more there is the sound of marching on the high road. Mona, who is in the house, will not go to the door again. She is sour of heart and stomach at the thought that she has to live among the Germans and help to provide for them.

She hears the new batch pass through to their compound, which is on the seaward side of the farm-house, and is compelled to notice that, unlike their predecessors, they make no noise. Next morning her father tells her they are young men for the most part, young clerks, young doctors, young professional men of many sorts.

"Quite a decent-looking lot," the old man says.

Mona curls her lips. They are Germans. That's enough for her.

"You're hard, woman, you're hard," the old man says. "What did the old Book teach thee to pray?—*Our* Father!"

Mona's hatred of the Germans is deepening every hour, yet twice a day she has to meet with some of them. Morning and evening she serves the regulated supply of milk to the men who come from the compounds, attended by their guard. They try to engage her in conversation, but she rarely answers them, and she tries not to listen.

Always the last to come is a pale-faced young fellow from the Third Compound. He has a hacking cough, and Mona thinks he must be consumptive. An impulse of pity sometimes seizes her, but she fights it down. After all, what matter? He belongs to the breed of the brutes who plotted the war.

The newspapers continue to come, and every night after supper the old man reads the war news to his household. The Germans, who seem to have been always advancing, are beginning to fall back. The armies of the Allies are co-operating, and it is hoped that before long a decisive blow will be struck. The old man's voice, which has usually had a certain tremor, grows strong and triumphant to-night. And when he has come to the end of his reading of the Gospel, which always follows the reading of the newspaper, he closes the big book, drops his head over it, shuts his eyes and, putting his hands together, says:

"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

When the farm-servants have gone out of the kitchen, Mona, who has been standing by the fireplace leaning one hand on the high mantelpiece, says, in a vibrant voice:

"Father, do you really want peace?"

"Goodness sakes, girl, why not?"

"*I* don't. I want war and more war until those demons are driven home or wiped out of the world."

A few days later a letter comes from Robbie. He has been made lieutenant, and is in high spirits. They have had a pretty rotten time thus far, but things are coming round now. He has heard it whispered that there is to be a great offensive soon, and that he himself is to go, for the first time, up to the front trenches. He is in a hurry now, preparations going forward so furiously, but they'll hear of him again before long.

"So bye-bye for the present, dad, and wish me luck! And, by the way, tell Mona I read a part of her last letter to some of the officers at the mess last night, and when I had finished they all cried out, like one man, 'My God! That's girl's a stunner!' And then the major said, 'If we had a thousand men with the spirit of your

sister the war wouldn't last a month longer.' "

A week has passed since Robbie's letter, and the newspapers report a wonderful victory—the enemy is on the run. Every evening, at the hour when the postman is expected to arrive at the camp, the old man, who has said nothing, has been out on the paved way in front of the farm-house (the " street," as the Manx call it), in his sleeve waistcoat, smoking his pipe and with the setting sun from over the sea on his face.

The other letter Robbie promised has not come yet. But this evening through the kitchen window Mona sees the postman striding slowly up the garden path with his head down and a letter in his hand, and something grips at her heart. The postman gives the letter to her father, and goes off without speaking. The old man fumbles it, turning the envelope over and over in his hands. It is a large one, and it has printing

across the top. At length, as if making a call on his resolution, he opens it with a trembling hand, tearing the letter as he drags it out of the envelope. He looks at it, seems to be trying to read it and finding himself unable to do so. Mona goes out to him, and he gives her the torn sheet of typewriting.

"Read it, girl," he says helplessly, and then he lays hold of the trammon tree that grows by the porch. Mona begins, "The Secretary of State for War regrets . . ."

She stops. There is no need to go farther. Robbie has fallen in action.

The truth dawns on the old man in a moment. An unseen flash as of lightning seems to strike him, and he reels as if about to fall. Mona calls to some of the farm hands, and they help her father indoors and up to bed, and then run for the nearest doctor—the English doctor of the First Compound.

The old man has had a stroke. It is a

slight one, but he must stay in bed for a long time and be kept absolutely quiet. No more letters or newspapers—nothing that will startle or distress him. It is his only chance.

Mona does not cry, but her eyes flash and her nostrils quiver. Her hatred of the Germans is now fiercer than ever. They have killed her brother and stricken her father. May God punish them—every one of them! Not their Kings and Kaisers only, but every man, woman and child! If He does not, there is no God at all—there cannot be.

THIRD CHAPTER

THREE months pass. The Internment Camp has been growing larger and larger. There are five compounds in it now, and twenty-five thousand civilian prisoners, besides the British Commandant and his officers and guard—two thousand more. It is a big ugly blotch of booths and tents and bare ground, surrounded by barbed wire and covering with black ashes like a black hand the green pastures where the sweet-smelling farm had been. In the middle of the camp, cut off from the compounds, is the farm-house, and its outhouses, with their many cows, and its farm-servants who sleep in the rooms over the dairy.

Mona is the only woman among twenty-seven thousand men. The Commandant, who is kind, calls her "The Woman of

Knockaloe." The first shock of her brother's loss and her father's seizure is over and she is going on with her work as before. After all the "creatures" of the cow-house have to be attended to, and if she could not leave Knockaloe before the Germans came she cannot leave it now when her father lies half-paralysed upstairs.

As often as she can do so during the day she runs up to him, and at night, after she has given the men their supper, she reads to him. It is only the Bible now, and by the old man's choice no longer the Gospels, but the Old Testament—Job with its lamentations, and afterwards the Psalms, but not the joyful ones, only those in which David calls on the Lord to revenge him upon his enemies. Her father is a changed man. His heart has grown bitter. He takes a fierce joy in David's denunciations and mutters them to himself when he is alone.

The girl was right. Those spawn of the Pit—what fate is too bad for them?

Christmas comes, the second Christmas, then spring, the second spring. Mona watches the life of the camp with loathing. Rising in the grey of the morning, she sees the prisoners ranging round their compounds like beasts in a cage, and on going to bed in the dark she sees the white light of the arc-lamps which have been set up at the far corners of the camp to prevent their escape during the night. She hears of frequent rioting, rigorously put down, and then of an attempt at insurrection in the messroom of the First Compound and of four prisoners being shot down by the guard. Serve them right! She has no pity.

She overhears the guards talking of indescribable vices among the men of the Third Compound and then of terrible punishments. Her work sometimes requires that she should pass this compound, and as often as she does so she becomes conscious that behind the barbed wires the men are looking at her with evil eyes and laughing

like monkeys. Her flesh creeps—she feels as if they were stripping her naked. The beasts! The monsters!

One sunny morning in the early summer Mona is awakened by the loud boom of a gun from the sea. Looking out she sees a warship coming to anchor in the bay. Later she sees great activity in the officers' quarters and hears that the Home Secretary has come from London to make an inspection of the camp and that the Commandant has sent for the Governor. Still later she sees the three going the rounds of the compounds. Towards noon they pass the farm on their way to the Commandant's dining-room, and, the kitchen window being open, Mona hears what the stranger, who looks angry, is saying:

"What can you expect? Shut men up like dogs and what wonder if they develop the vices of dogs! The only remedy is work, work, work."

A few days after that the joiners and

bricklayers are building workshops all over the camp and within a month there is the sound of hammering and sawing and planing from inside these places, as if the prisoners were working. Mona laughs. They will never turn these creatures into human beings—never!

Autumn comes and the fields outside the camp are waving yellow and red to the harvest, but the Manx boys, nearly all that are worth anything, are away at the war, and the farmers are saying the corn will lie down uncut and rot on the ground if they cannot get help to gather it.

One night she hears that the better-behaved of the prisoners are to be sent out to the neighbouring farms to work at the harvesting, and next morning she sees a batch of them going off with their guard, down the avenue and through the gates.

"There'll be trouble coming of this," she thinks. "Such men are not to be trusted."

Inside a month the camp is ringing with a scandal. The letters arriving at the camp for the prisoners have always been examined by censors. Most of the letters have come from friends in their own country, but now it is found that some are from Manx girls who, having met with German prisoners while working on the land, have struck up friendships. One of these girls has written to tell her German lover that she is in "trouble" and that the wife of her master is turning her out. Her name is Liza Kinnish.

Mona's anger is unbounded. The slut! She has a brother at the war too! Mona has no pity for such creatures. While their boys out there at the front are fighting and dying for them they are carrying on at home with these German reptiles! Serve them right, whatever the disgrace that falls on them!

"I'd have such women whipped—yes, whipped in the public market-place."

From that time forward Mona hates the prisoners as she had never hated them before. She cannot bear to look into their German faces or to hear the sound of their German voices. All the same she has to live among them for her father's sake and even to serve them twice a day with the milk from the dairy.

Late in the year, at seven in the morning, she is measuring the milk into the cans, which are marked with the numbers of the various compounds. The prisoners come to carry them away, saluting her with the mist about their mouths as they do so, but she makes no answer. When she thinks they have all gone she finds the can of the Third Compound still standing by the dairy door where she had left it.

The pale-faced boy who coughed always came for that, and was generally the last to arrive. After a while, when she has her back to the door, she hears a voice behind her.

"Is this for me, miss?"

She starts. Something in his voice arrests her. It is not harsh and guttural, like that of the other prisoners, but soft, deep and human. For one dizzy moment she almost thinks it is Robbie's.

She turns. A young man, whom she has never seen before, is on the threshold. He is about thirty years of age, tall, slim, erect, fair-haired, with hazel eyes and a clean-cut face that has an open expression. Can this be a German?

After a moment of silence Mona says:

"Who are you?"

He tells her. The young fellow who had fetched the milk before had broken a blood-vessel on awakening early that morning and been carried up to the hospital.

"What's your name?"

"Oskar."

"Oskar what?"

"Oskar Heine."

"And you are in Compound Three?"

"Yes."

Mona gazes at him in silence for a moment, and then recovering herself, she says:

"Yes, that's yours."

The young man touches his cap and says:

"Thank you."

Mona tries to answer him but she cannot. He goes off, carrying his can, and with his guard behind him. Mona finds herself looking after him, first through the door and then through the dairy window.

All that day she goes about her work with a serious face and is cross with the farm hands when they do anything amiss. And at night, when supper is over, and her father calls down to her to come up and read his Bible, she calls back,

"Not to-night, dad—I've got a headache."

Then she sits before the fire alone and does not go to bed until morning.

FOURTH CHAPTER

ANOTHER month has passed. Mona has been fighting a hard battle with herself. Some evil spirit seems to have found its way into her heart and she has had to struggle against it all day and every day.

"It can't be true! It's impossible! I should hate myself," she thinks.

To fortify herself against her secret enemy she spends as much time as she can spare with her father. The old man is now bitterer than ever against the Germans. They have killed his son, and he can never forgive them.

"Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered. . . . Let not the ungodly have their desire, O Lord; let hot burning coals fall upon them; let them be cast into the fire and into the pit, that they may never rise again."

Mona hears the old man's voice through the thin partition wall that separates her room from his, and she makes an effort to join in his imprecations. But the terrible thing is that she catches herself thinking they are wicked psalms, and that David, when he said such things, was not "a man after God's own heart" but a devil.

This frightens her and she tries to make amends to her conscience by being as harsh as possible to the prisoners. When Oskar comes to the dairy with the rest she never allows herself to look at him, and when he speaks, which is seldom, she snaps at him or else tries not to hear what he is saying. But one morning she is compelled to listen.

"Ludwig's gone."

"Ludwig?"

"The man who used to come for the milk."

"The boy with the cough?"

"Yes. Died in the night and is to be buried to-morrow. Just twenty-two and

such a quiet young fellow. He was the only son of his mother too and she is a widow. I've got to write and tell her. She'll be broken-hearted."

Mona feels a tightening at her throat, and then tears in her eyes, but she forces herself to say: "Well, she's not the only mother who has lost a son. People who make wars must expect to suffer for them."

Oskar looks at her for a moment and then goes off without speaking again. At the next moment she catches herself looking after him through the window just as he turns his head and looks back.

"Oh God forgive me! Forgive me!" she thinks and feels as if she would like to beat herself.

A week later when Oskar comes as usual he is carrying a small wooden box, which he sets down inside the dairy door. It is from Ludwig's mother, and contains one of the little glass domes of artificial flowers which the Germans lay on the graves of their dead.

"She asks me to lay them on Ludwig's, but how can I, not being allowed to go out of the gates?"

The lid of the box has been loosened, and lifting it, he shows the glass dome with an inscription attached. Mona allows herself to stoop and look at it. It is in German.

"What does it say?" she asks.

"'With Mother's everlasting love.'"

Mona feels as if a knife has gone to her heart, but she rises hastily and says sharply: "You may take it away. I'll have nothing to do with it," and Oskar goes off, but he leaves the box behind him.

All day long she tries not to look at it, but it is constantly meeting her eye, and in the evening, when her work is done and everything is quiet, she picks up the box, puts it under her cloak and turns towards the gates of the encampment.

"Better have it out of my sight," she thinks as she goes into the churchyard of Kirk Patrick.

She has no difficulty in finding the place. Other Germans have died and been buried since the camp began. Here they lie in a little square by themselves at the back of the church, with recumbent white marble stones above them inscribed with their foreign names. On the last of the graves, not yet covered, she lays the flowers and then throws the box away.

"After all, it's only human. Nobody can blame me for that."

But do what she will she cannot help thinking of the German boy and of his mother weeping for him in his German home.

She has heard the tramp of a horse's hoofs on the road behind her, and as she returns through the lych-gate the rider draws up and speaks to her. It is the Commandant, who has been taking his evening ride before dinner. He asks what she has been doing and she tells him quite truthfully. He looks serious and says: "It's natural that you

should feel pity for some of these men, but take an old man's advice, my child, and don't let it go any further."

Mona tries to follow the Commandant's counsel, but doing so tears her heart until it bleeds. Even the hours with her father fail to fortify her. The old man is well enough now to sit up in a chair in his bedroom and certain of his neighbouring farmers are permitted to see him. One of them, a babbling fellow, tells him of the sinking of a great passenger liner by an enemy submarine and the loss of more than a thousand lives.

The old man breaks into a towering passion. "Those sons of darkness, may the Lord destroy them for ever! May the captain of that submarine never know another night's sleep as long as he lives! May the cries of the drowning torment his soul until it comes up for judgment, and may it then be damned for ever!"

"Be quiet, father," says Mona. "You know what the doctor said. Besides, is it Christian-like to follow the sins of a man to the next world and wish his soul in hell?"

But when she is alone in her own room she knows that her Christian charity is all a delusion.

"Oh God help me! God help me! Send me something to help me," she cries.

One morning in summer the Commandant calls on her father and she leads him upstairs. He takes a little leather-covered case out of his pocket and, opening it by its spring, shows a military medal.

"What is it?" asks the old man.

"The Victoria Cross, old friend, won by your son for conspicuous bravery in battle and sent to you by the King."

The old man wipes his eyes and says: "But who is to wear it now that Robbie is gone?"

"May I make a suggestion?" says the

Commandant. "Let your daughter wear it. Why not?"

"Yes, yes, why not?" says Mona, and she seizes it convulsively and pins it on her breast.

Next morning, feeling braver, with the medal on her breast, she looks Oskar Heine full in the face when he comes to the dairy door as usual. He sees it and asks what it is and where it came from, and with a proud lift of the head she tells him, almost defiantly, about Robbie and what he did at the war.

"What a splendid fellow your brother must have been," says Oskar.

Mona gasps. All her pride and defiance seem to be stricken out of her in a moment.

The English newspapers continue to come, and one evening, in the midst of reports of indescribable German barbarities, Mona finds a letter from an English soldier to his family telling of a good act by an enemy. He had been wounded in an en-

gagement in Belgium and, left all day for dead on the battlefield, he had crawled at night on his stomach over half a mile of churned-up land to a lonely farmhouse, being drawn to it by a dim light in a window. The farmer had turned out to be an old German, but he had been "a white man" for all that, and though some of the officers of the victorious German army were even then drinking and singing and making merry in his front parlour, he had smuggled the wounded British lad into his cellar, and helped him to escape in the morning.

Some dizzy impulse, vaguely associated with misty thoughts of Oskar, causes Mona to carry the newspaper upstairs and to read the boy's letter to her father.

"So there's good and bad in all races, you see. That old German farmer must be a good creature," she says. Whereupon the old man, who has pulled himself up in bed to listen, says, with tight-set lips and an angry frown:

"Maybe he is, but who knows if he isn't the father of the brute who fired the explosive bullet into my son's heart?"

Mona drops the newspaper and flies from the room, and the old man cries after her in a whimpering voice:

"What's coming over thee, girl? I can't tell in the world what's coming over thee."

FIFTH CHAPTER

One morning Mona hears of something that seems to strengthen her against her secret enemy. A prisoner in Compound Four, which lies nearest to the hill, has been captured during the night in an attempt to escape by means of a tunnel from his dormitory to the open field under "Corrin's Folly." The case has been brought before the Commandant, and he has referred it to the civil court in Peel. With nothing to complain of now, what ingrates these Germans are!

Mona hurries to the court-house. It is full to overflowing with police, guards and townspeople. The Governor of the island has been sent for, and he is sitting on the bench with the High Bailiff. The prisoner is in the dock with a soldier on either side

of him. His appearance is a shock to Mona. Instead of the hardened sinner she had expected to look upon, she sees a thin, pale, timid-looking man with fever in his frightened eyes.

The facts are proved against him by the captain of the guard, and by one of his fellow-prisoners. For two months at least he had been tunnelling the ground from beneath his bed to the field outside the barbed-wire fences, working at night, while the other prisoners were asleep, and concealing the soil he dug out of the ground in the empty space under the stage of the camp theatre, which was also the camp chapel. At the last moment, just as he was about to emerge from the earth in the darkness of night, he had been caught by one of the guard, who had acted on the information of his nearest bed-fellow.

Already the story of this treachery has swallowed up Mona's feeling against the prisoner, but when, in reply to the

Governor, who addresses him sharply, he tells his own story, in halting words and with a tremor in his voice, she finds the tears dropping on the military medal she is wearing on her bosom.

He is a hairdresser, married to an Englishwoman and has two children, both little. After his marriage he had always meant to take out his nationalization papers, but when he had saved enough money to do so his wife was not well, for she was expecting her first baby, so he spent it in taking her to the seaside for a holiday. Afterwards they set up a shop in a suburb of London and that took everything.

"Come to the point. Don't waste the time of the court," says the Governor.

The prisoner struggles on with his story. At first when he was brought to the camp his wife wrote every week, telling him how she was and how the children were. His eldest little girl had been going to a private school, and when her schoolmates asked her

where was her father she used to say: "Daddy is at the war," for that was what his wife had told the child. But the truth got out at last, and then the parents of the other children demanded that his little girl should be dismissed, and she was, and now she was on the streets.

"Quick! What has all that got to do with your attempt to escape?" says the Governor, and Mona feels as if she wants to strike him.

"But that's not everything, your Excellency," says the prisoner.

"Go on," says the High Bailiff.

"After a time my wife stopped writing, and then I had a letter from a neighbour."

"What did it say?" asks the High Bailiff, and with a fierce flash of his wild eyes the prisoner tells him.

Another German, who for some reason had been exempted from internment, had been put in by the authorities to help his wife to carry on the business, which was

going to wreck and ruin. He was a scoundrel, and he had got hold of his wife, who had given in to him for the sake of the children.

"It drove me mad to think of it, sir. That's why I worked at night, making that tunnel under the ground, while the other men were sleeping. I wanted to get back and kill him."

"Good thing we caught you in time, then," says the Governor.

The sentence is bread and water and seven days' solitary confinement.

Mona, who wants to cry out in court, hurries home, and she is there when the guard brings the prisoner back. He looks like a picture of despair—bewildered, distraught and hopeless.

Mona finds it harder than ever after this to listen to her father's imprecations when somebody tells him of German victories.

"Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered. . . . Root them out, Oh Lord, that they be no more a people."

Sometimes she makes a sort of remonstrance, and then the old man looks up at her and says again:

"What's come over thee, woman? I don't know in the world what's coming over thee."

Every morning on getting up she looks away over the barbed-wire fence to the open fields beyond where the young men and the girls are working, as Robbie and she used to do in the early dawn at harvest. And every night on going to bed she stares down at the bare, black, cinder-covered encampment lit up from end to end by its fierce white arc-lights. More than ever now she feels like that hairdresser, and wants to escape from the camp. Yet the strange thing is that she knows quite well that even if she could do so she would not.

Oskar Heine has been made a camp cap-

tain for good behaviour, and is permitted to move about as he likes, yet they rarely meet and hardly ever speak. But one day he comes alone to the door of the dairy, and holding out something that is in the palm of his hand he says :

" Do you know this? "

It is Robbie's silver lever watch.

" Where did you get it? "

" An old schoolfellow of mine sent it from home—from Mannheim."

" How did he come by it? "

He tells her. At the beginning of the last British advance his schoolfellow had been shot immediately in front of the first line of the British trenches. He had lain there for some time with the bullets whistling over his head, crying out for his mother (as men do on the battlefield if they think they are dying), when he heard an English soldier say :

" Look here, lads, I can't listen to this chap any longer; I'm going to fetch him

in." Then the soldier had climbed over the top and dragged him down to the British trench; but in doing so he had himself been potted. The British lads had put them both into a dug-out, lying side by side, and when their advance began they had gone on and left them. How long they lay together Oskar's schoolfellow did not know. When he came to himself he had found he was getting better, but his companion was fatally wounded. At length the brave fellow (he was a lieutenant) had tugged at his pocket, and dragged out his watch and said: "Look here, Fritz old chap, if you live to go home send this to my sister; she lives at Knockaloe."

Mona tosses in bed all that night, gazing into the darkness with terror, after she has drawn her curtains close to shut out the light of the arc-lamps. Remembering what her father had said when she read the soldier boy's letter, she had not shown the watch to her father, but hidden it away in a drawer.

It had come to her like a reproach from the dead, and she was afraid to look at it.

All at once she asks herself *why?* If those two brave boys lying out there in that deserted dug-out, the one thinking of his sister at Knockaloe and the other of his mother in her German home, could be friends at the last, was it the devil that had made them so?

"Oh God, my God, why do men make wars?"

SIXTH CHAPTER

MONA knows that this is the beginning of the end. She finds herself thinking of Oskar constantly, and especially when she is dropping off to sleep at night and awakening in the morning. With a hot and quivering heart she asks herself what is to come of it all. She does not know. She dare not think. A feeling of shame and dread seems to clutch her by the throat.

One day the neighbouring farmer who comes to visit her father blurts out another of his shocking stories. It is about a midday raid over London.

Towards noon on a beautiful summer day, in an infant school in East London, a hundred little children, ranging in age from three years to six, had been singing their hymn before the time came to scamper

home in childish glee to dinner, when out of the sunshine of the sky two bombs had fallen from a German air-machine and killed ten of them and wounded fifty. The scene had been a frightful shambles. Some of the children had been destroyed beyond all recognition, their sweet limbs being splashed like a bloody avalanche against the broken walls. And when, a moment later, their mothers had come breathless, bare-headed and with wild eyes to the schoolhouse door, they saw the mangled bodies of their little ones brought out in a stream of blood.

Mona enters her father's bedroom just as the babbler is finishing his story. The old man, who is quivering with rage, has struggled to his feet and is stamping his stick on the floor and swearing—nobody ever having heard an oath from his lips before.

"They'll pay for it, though—these damned madmen and their masters—they'll pay for it to the uttermost farthing! Cursed be of God, these sons of hell!"

The Government in London must make reprisals. They must destroy a thousand German children for every British child that had been destroyed!

Mona tries first to appease and then to reprove him. What good will it do to the poor dead children in London that other children in Germany, now living in the fulness of their childish joy, should be massacred?

"The children are innocent. . . ."

"Innocent? They'll not be long innocent. They'll grow up and do the same themselves. Oh my God, do Thou to them as with the Midianites who perished at Endor, and became as the dung of the earth!"

"Hush! Hush! Father! Father!"

"Why not? What's coming over thee, woman? What's been happening downstairs to change thee?"

At that word Mona feels as if a sword has pierced her heart, and she hurries out of the room.

After a while the mother-instinct in her comes uppermost. Her father is right. To make war on children is the crime of crimes. The people who do such things must belong to the race of the devil.

That evening she is crossing to the "haggard" when she meets Oskar Heine coming out of his compound. She does not look his way, but he stops her and speaks.

"You've heard what's in the papers?"

"Indeed I have."

"I'm ashamed. I'm sorry."

"Never mind about sorry. Wait until the same is done to your own people, and then we'll see, we'll see."

He is about to tell her something, but she will not listen, and goes off with uplifted head.

A week passes. Mona has seen nothing more of Oskar Heine. Being free to come and go as he likes, he must be keeping out of her way. She is feeling less bitter about

that shocking thing in London. After all, it was war. It is true that all the victories of war are as nothing against the golden head of one darling child, but then nobody sees that now. Nobody in the world has ever seen it—nobody but He. . . .

"*Suffer the little children to come unto me . . .*"

But only think! That was said two thousand years ago, and yet . . . and yet . . .

Christmas is near, the third Christmas. Mona reads in the newspaper that it has been agreed by the Marshal and generals commanding on both sides of the Western Front that there shall be a four hours' truce of the battlefields on Christmas Eve. How splendid! A truce of God in memory of what happened two thousand years ago! Why couldn't they have it in the camp also? She suggests the idea to Oskar.

"Glorious! Why can't we?" he says.

He will find a way to put the matter up

to the Commandant, and then he will speak to the prisoners.

Since the prisoners have been set to work they have been living a more human life in their amusements also. Every compound has its band. The guards have their band, too. Mona hears from Oskar that the Commandant consents.

"It's Christmas! God bless me, yes, why not?" he says.

The prisoners are delighted, and the guards agree to play with them.

"Oh, they're not such bad chaps after all," the captain says.

At the beginning of Christmas week there is the muffled sound at night of the bands in various parts of the camp practising inside their booths. Oskar comes to the door of the farm-house to say that they intend to play in unison, and want the "Woman of Knockaloe" to choose the carols and hymns for them. Mona chooses what she knows.

"Noël," "The Feast of Stephen," and "Lead, Kindly Light."

"Splendid!" says Oskar. He is to be the conductor in Compound Three.

Snow falls, then comes frost, and on Christmas Eve the ground of the black camp is white and hard, and a moon is shining—a typical Christmas.

Mona has had a bustling day, but at nine she is finished and goes upstairs to sit with her father. The old man, who is in bed, has heard something of her activities, and is not too well pleased with them.

"What's coming over thee, girl?" he keeps on repeating. "What's coming over thee anyway?"

"Goodness sakes, why ask me that, dad? It's Christmas, isn't it?"

Having three hours to wait, she sits by the fire and reads to him—from the Gospels this time:

"*And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord*

shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

"*And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*

"*For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. . . .*

"*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,*

"*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.*"

Mona stops. The old man is breathing heavily. He has fallen asleep.

At eleven o'clock Mona is in her own room. What a magnificent night! The moon is shining full through the window, making its pattern on the carpet. Outside it is so bright that the entire camp is lit up by it, and there had been no need to switch on the big arc-lamps.

The camp lies white in the sparkling

snow. For the first time for more than three years it is not distinguishable from the country round about. The white mantle of winter has made camp and country one.

It is quiet out there in the night. Not a breath of wind is stirring. A dog is barking in the Fifth Compound, which is half a mile away. There is no other sound except a kind of smothered hum from the insides of the booths, where twenty-five thousand men are waiting for the first hour of Christmas Day—only this and the rhythmical throb of the tide on the distant shore. The old man in the next room is still breathing heavily.

Mona, too, is waiting. She is sitting up on her bed, half-covered by the counterpane. At one moment she remembers Robbie's watch and thinks of taking it out of the drawer and winding it up and putting it on, but something says "Not yet." Although Peel church is nearly a mile away, she tells

herself that on this silent night she will hear the striking of the clock.

She thinks of the battlefront in France. The truce of God is there too. No booming of cannon, no shrieking of shells, only the low murmur of a sea of men in the underground trenches and the bright moon over the white waste about them. Thank God! Thank God!

At a quarter to twelve she is up again and at the window. A dim, mysterious, divine majesty seems to have come down on all the troubled world. The moon is shining full on her face. She hears marching on the crinkling snow—the band of the guard are crossing the avenue to take up the place assigned to them on the officers' tennis-court. Behind them there is the shuffling of irregular feet—her farm-hands are following.

Then, through the thin air comes the silvery sound of the clock of Peel church striking midnight, and then, clear and dis-

tinct, from the guards' band the first bar of "The Feast of Stephen."

"*When the snow lay on the ground . . .*"

After that another bar of it from the Third Compound (Oskar must be conducting):

"*Deep and crisp and even . . .*"

Then comes another bar from the First Compound, and then another and another from the distant Compounds Four and Five.

After that there is a second carol:

"*Noël, Noël, born is the King of Israel. . . .*"

Then another carol and another, all played like the first, and finally, verse by verse, from near and far, the hymn she had selected:

"*Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom.*"

Mona is crying. Now she understands herself—why she suggested this to Oskar and why Oskar has carried it out. If only peace would come the barrier that divides

them would be broken down! God send it! God send it!

Her breath on the window-pane has frosted the cold glass, but she is sure she sees somebody coming towards the house. It is a man, and he is stumbling along, half doubled up as if drunk or wounded. He is making for the front door. Trembling with half-conscious apprehension of the truth, Mona runs downstairs to open it.

The man is Oskar Heine. By the light of the lamp she had left burning on the table she sees him. He is clutching with one hand a bough of the trammon tree that grows by the porch, and in the other he holds a sheet of blue paper. His cap is pushed back from his forehead, which is wet with perspiration, his eyes are wild, and his face is ashen.

"May I come in?"

"Indeed yes."

He comes into the house, never having done so before, and drops heavily into the old man's seat by the fire, which is dying out.

"What is it?" she asks.

"Look," he says, and hands her the paper. "It has just come. The post was late to-night." His voice seems to be dying out also.

Mona takes the paper. It is in English, and, standing by the lamp, she begins to read it aloud:

"*American Consulate—Mannheim.*"

"That's my home—Mannheim."

"*I regret to inform you . . .*"

"Don't! Don't!"

Mona reads the rest of the letter to herself. It is from the American Consul, and tells Oskar that in a British air raid in the middle of the night the house in which his mother had lived with his sister had been struck by a bomb, and the wing in which his sister slept had been utterly destroyed.

Mona makes a cry and involuntarily reads aloud again:

"*The child is missing and it is believed . . .*"

"Don't! Don't!"

There is silence between them for a moment, only broken by Oskar's low sobs and Mona's quick breathing.

"Your sister?"

"Yes, I wanted to tell you about her that night of . . ."

"I know," says Mona. With a stab of remorse the memory of what she had said has come back to her.

"Only ten. Such a sweet little thing—the sweetest darling in the world. Used to write every week and send me her sketches. My father died when she was a baby, and since then she has looked on me as father and brother too. And now . . . Oh, it is too stupid! It is too stupid!"

Mona cannot speak, and he goes on saying:

"It is too stupid. It is too stupid!"

He drops his head into his hands, and Mona sees the tears oozing out between his fingers.

"Mignon! My little Mignon!"

Still Mona does not utter a word, and at last he gets up and says:

"I had to tell you. There was no one else."

His face is broken up and he is turning to go. Mona can bear no more. By a swift, irresistible, unconquerable, almighty impulse she flings her arms about his neck.

Meantime, the old man upstairs had been awakened by the bands. He had raised himself in bed to listen. The carols out there in the night touched him at first, but after a while they made him feel still more bitter. He was thinking about Robbie. What was the good of singing about peace in the midst of war? Peace? There would be no peace until the righteous God, with His mighty hand and outstretched arm, had hewn His enemies to pieces!

He heard a heavy thud at the door downstairs, and then a man's voice, with Mona's,

in the kitchen. His first thought was of "The Waits," for which Manx girls stayed up on Christmas Eve, and then a blacker thought came to him.

He struggled out of bed, pulled on his dressing-gown, fumbled for his walking-stick, and made for the stairs. It was dark on the landing, but there was light below coming from the kitchen, and, making a great effort, he staggered down.

How long Mona and Oskar were in each other's arms they did not know. It might have been only for a moment. But all at once they became aware of a shuffling step behind them. Mona turns to look. Her father is on the threshold.

The old man's face is ghastly. His eyes blaze, his mouth is open and his lips quiver, as if he is struggling for breath and voice. At length both come, and he falls on Mona with fearful cries.

"Harlot! Strumpet! So this is what

has been changing thee! Thy brother dead in France, and thou in the arms of this German! May God punish thee! May thy brother's spirit follow thee day and night and destroy thee! Curse thee! Curse thee! May the curse of God . . .''

The old man's voice chokes in his throat. His face changes colour, and he totters and falls.

Before Mona is aware of it some of the farm-hands are in the house picking the old man up. She had left the outer door open, and they had heard her father's cries.

They carry him back to bed, limp and unconscious. Mona stands for some moments as if smitten by a blow on the brain. A horror of great darkness has fallen on her. When she recovers self-possession she looks round for Oskar. He has gone.

SEVENTH CHAPTER

THE old farmer died, without speaking, a few days after his second seizure. Mona watched with him constantly. Sometimes she prayed, with all the fervour of her soul, that he might recover consciousness. But the strange thing was that sometimes she found herself hoping that he might never do so.

When the end came she was overwhelmed with remorse, but still struggling to defend herself. It was early morning, and she was alone with him at the last. In the wild burstings of affection, mingled with self-reproach, she cried :

"I couldn't help it, father. I couldn't help it."

They buried her father at Kirk Patrick in the family grave of the Craines, which was

close to the German quarter. Her relations from all parts of the island came "to see the old man home." There were uncles and aunts and cousins to the third and fourth degree, most of them quite unknown to her. When the service was over they went back to the farm-house, by permission of the camp authorities, to hear the will read by the vicar. It had been made shortly after the death of Robbie and consisted of one line only:

"*I leave all I have to my dear daughter.*"

The uncles and aunts and cousins, who had no claim on the dead man, were shocked at his selfishness.

"Is there no legacy to anybody, parson?"

"None."

"Not so much as a remembrance?"

"Nothing. Everything goes to Mona."

"We'll leave it with her, then," they said, and rose to go. As they passed out of the house Mona heard one of them say to another:

"It will be enough to make the man turn in his grave, though, if the farm goes to a Boche some day."

That night, sitting late over a dying fire, Mona overhears a group of men and boys talking on "the street" outside. They are her servants on the farm. Having heard her father's denunciation of her on Christmas Eve they have since been circulating damaging reports, and now they are busy with their own plans for the future.

"She has killed the old man, that's the long and short of it."

"So it is."

"I'm working no more for a woman that's done a thing like that."

"Me neither."

A week later they came to Mona one by one with various lying excuses for leaving her. Asking no questions she pays them off and lets them go.

She has been alone for three days when

the Commandant, with his kind eyes, comes to see what he can do. What if he sends some of the guard to help her?

"No, sir, no."

"Some of the Germans, then?"

"N-o."

"But, good gracious, girl, you can't carry on the farm by yourself."

"I'm strong. I'll manage somehow, sir."

"But sixteen cows—it's utterly impossible—utterly!"

"Half of them are dry now and will have to go out to grass. I can attend to the rest, sir."

"But won't you be afraid to live in this house alone—a woman, with men like these about you?"

"I don't think I will, sir."

Half a year has passed. Mona has seen nothing of Oskar since Christmas. With a thrill of the heart she hears of the wide liberty he has won by his ability and good

behaviour. But even in that there is a certain sting. He is free of the camp now as far as the barbed wire extends; why does he not come to see her? Sometimes she feels bitter that he does not come, but again the strange thing is that sometimes she is sure that if he did come she would run away from him.

All the same, she has a sense of his presence always about her. No matter how early she rises in the morning she finds that the rough work of the farm, unfit for a woman, has been done by other hands before she has reached the cow-house.

For a long time this sense as of a supernatural presence, unseen and unheard, helping her and caring for her and keeping guard over her, strengthens her days and sweetens her nights. But at length something happens which causes her courage to fail.

Rumour has come to the camp that a great enemy offensive is shortly to be made

on the Western front. To meet the need of it the old guard of tried and trusted men are sent overseas, and their places filled by a new guard, which seem to have been recruited from the very sweepings of the streets.

The captain of this new guard assigned to the first three compounds (the nearest to the farmhouse) turns out to be a brute. His antecedents are doubtful. His own men, to whom he is a tyrant, say he has been a barman in a public-house somewhere, and that a few years before the war he was convicted of a criminal assault on a woman.

Mona becomes aware that she is attracting the attention of this ruffian. He is asking questions about her, following her with his evil eyes, and making coarse remarks that are intended to meet her ears.

"Fine gal! Splendid! What a woman for a wife, too!"

During the day he finds excuses to call at the farm-house and engage her in conversa-

tion. At length he knocks at her door at night. It is late, the camp is quiet, nobody is in sight anywhere. Before knowing who knocked Mona has opened the door. The man makes an effort to enter, but she refuses to admit him. He pleads, coaxes, threatens and finally tries to force his way into the house.

"Don't be a fool, girl. Let me in," he whispers.

She struggles to shut the door in his face. Her strength is great, but his is greater, and he has almost conquered her resistance when the figure of another man comes from behind.

It is Oskar. With both hands he takes the blackguard by the throat, drags him from the door and flings him five yards back into the road, where he falls heavily and lies for a moment. Then he gets up and shambles off, saying nothing, and at the next instant Oskar himself, without a word to Mona, turns away.

It is midsummer. The insular horse-racing has begun—an event in which the prisoners are keenly interested, but of which they are supposed to know nothing. Since the changing of the guard the *moral* of the camp has gone down headlong. Drink has been getting in—nobody knows how. It is first discovered in the First Compound, commonly called the millionaire's quarter.

Suspecting an illicit traffic the officers raid a tent occupied by a German baron, and find half a dozen men about a table, with champagne, cigars, brandy and every luxury of a fashionable night club. A searching inquiry is made by the Commandant. It has no result. The captain of the guard, who is zealous in helping, can offer no explanation.

Later it is discovered that still worse corruption is going on in the Second Compound. The sailors are quarrelling, fighting and rioting under the influence of raw spirits, generally rum, probably much above proof. Where does their money come

from? And how does the drink get into the camp? For their work in the workshops and on the land the prisoners are paid, but their small earnings (less a tax to the camp and a small sum for "fag-money") go into the camp bank, to be distributed when the war is over. Once more an inquiry is fruitless. The men refuse to speak, and the captain of the guard is bewildered.

One morning, on rising, Mona sees Oskar Heine in the avenue talking through the barbed-wire fence to a group of sailors in the Second Compound. The men are behaving like infuriated animals, clenching and shaking their fists as if vowing vengeance. A moment afterwards she sees the captain, with a quick step, as if coming from the First Compound, cross the avenue, disperse the men by a fierce command, and then turn hotly on Oskar. Mona is too far away to hear what is being said, but she sees that Oskar, without answering, walks slowly away.

An hour afterwards, when she is at work in the dairy, she hears harsh cries from the Second Compound. Going to the door she sees a shocking scene. The infuriated prisoners, whom she had seen talking to Oskar, augmented by at least a hundred others, are hunting a man as if with the intention of lynching him. They are shouting and gesticulating, and the man is screaming. They have torn his coat off, and the upper part of his body is almost naked. He is running to and fro as if trying to escape from his pursuers, and they are beating him as he flies and kicking him when he falls. The soldiers on guard at the gate of the compound are racing to the man's relief and threatening with their rifles, but the rifles are being wrenched out of their hands and turned against them. The clamour is fearful. The whole compound is in wild disorder.

"The thief! The cheat! Search him! Strip him!"

Without waiting to think what she is doing, but with a frightful apprehension of danger to Oskar, Mona runs into the compound (there being no one at the gate to prevent her), and with her strong arms, which are bare to the elbows, she struggles through the mob of drunken men.

"Stop! Stand back! You brutes!"

More from the sound of her voice than from the strength of her muscles the prisoners fall away and she reaches their victim. He is on the ground at her feet, bleeding about the face and head and crying for mercy.

It is the captain of the guard!

When the miserable creature sees who has rescued him he squirms to her feet and calls on her to save him. A body of the guard from another compound come running up and carry him away, and the infuriated men slink off to the cover of their quarters.

Later in the day Mona hears that six of the prisoners have been arrested and sent to

the lock-up at Peel and that Oskar Heine is one of them. Still later she learns that they are to be brought up for trial in the morning.

What is Oskar to be charged with? Mona has not been summoned, but she decides to go to the trial. She has a presentiment of something evil that is to happen to her there, but all the same she determines to go.

EIGHTH CHAPTER

MONA rises next day before the cows have begun to call, and as soon as her work in the dairy is done she hurries off to Peel. The court-house is as crowded as before with guards and townspeople. With difficulty she crushes her way into the last place by the door.

The proceedings have begun and the prisoners are standing in the dock with their backs to her—five unkempt heads of common-looking sailors and Oskar's erect figure, with his fair hair, at the end of them. The Governor is on the bench, and he has the High Bailiff and the Commandant on either side of him. The captain of the guard, with a bandage across his forehead, is in the

witness-box. He is answering the questions of the advocate for the Crown.

"And now, Captain, tell us your own story."

Humbly saluting the court, with many "sirs" and "worships" and "excellencies," the captain tells his tale. It was yesterday about this time. He had hardly entered the Second Compound in the ordinary discharge of his duty when he was set upon, without the slightest warning or provocation, by a gang of the prisoners. There must have been two hundred of them, but the six men in the dock had been the ringleaders. Five of the six belonged to the Second Compound, but the sixth came from the Third, and he was the worst of the lot. Being a camp captain he was allowed to move about anywhere, and he had often abused his liberty to undermine the captain's authority.

"How do you know that?" asks the High Bailiff.

"My guard have told me what he has said, your Worship, but I heard him myself in this case."

"What did you hear?"

"I was behind the baron's bungalow in the First Compound, your Worship, when I heard him telling the men of the second to lynch and murder me."

The Governor leans forward and says:

"You mean that this sixth man has a spite against you?"

"A most bitter spite, your Excellency."

"Have you given him any cause?"

"No cause whatever, your Excellency."

"What is his name?"

"Oskar Heine."

"Let Oskar Heine be called," says the Governor.

As Oskar steps out of the dock Mona feels hot and dizzy. Being a prisoner he is not sworn.

He stands at the foot of the witness-box, but his head is up, and when he answers

the questions of the advocate appointed to represent the prisoners he does not seem to be afraid.

"You have heard the evidence of the captain."

"I have."

"Is it true—what he says about yourself?"

"No, sir, not a word of it."

"Did you take any part in the attack that was made on him?"

"None whatever."

"Did you tell the other prisoners to do what they did?"

"No, I did not; but if I had known as much about the captain then as I know now I should have done."

"Done what?" asks the Governor sharply.

"Told them to do what they did—and worse."

"And what do you know now, if you please?"

"That he has been cheating and bullying and blackmailing and corrupting them."

"And if you had known this before what would you have told them to do, as you say?"

"Thrash him within an inch of his life."

"You admit that?"

"I do, sir."

The Governor turns to the High Bailiff and says:

"Is it necessary to go further? The man denies that he took part in the actual assault, but no evidence could be more corroborative of the captain's story."

The High Bailiff appears to assent, and the advocate for the defence, who had intended to call the other prisoners, signifies by a gesture that he thinks it is hopeless to do so now.

"I ask for the utmost penalty of the law against the six prisoners," says the advocate for the Crown, "for a brutal and cowardly assault on an officer of the army in the lawful discharge of his duty."

There is some low talking on the bench which Mona, who is breathing audibly, does not hear, and then the High Bailiff prepares to give judgment.

"This is a serious offence. If such riots were to be permitted at the encampment all military discipline would be at an end. Therefore it is the duty of the civil authorities in dealing with civilian prisoners . . ."

The High Bailiff's voice is drowned by a noise near the door. A woman's tremulous voice is heard to say :

"Wait a minute, sir."

At the next moment Mona is seen pushing her way to the front. The advocate for the Crown recognizes her, and thinking she comes to support his case, he rises and says :

"This is the young woman I spoke of in my opening as having saved the life of the captain from the fury of the prisoners. If it is not too late she may be able to say something that will throw light on the conduct of the men and on their motive."

"No, not on the conduct and motive of the men, but on that of the captain," says Mona.

There is further murmuring on the bench, and then the High Bailiff says:

"Let her be called."

Being in the witness-box and sworn, Mona, with the eyes of the judges, advocates and spectators upon her, begins to tremble all over, but she answers firmly when spoken to.

"You wish to say something about the captain—what is it?"

"That he is a bad man, and a disgrace to the army."

The Governor puts up his eyeglass and looks at her. Then he smiles rather cynically and says:

"You seem to know something about the army, miss. What is the medal you are wearing on your breast?"

"The Victoria Cross, sir," says Mona, throwing up her head, "won by my brother

when he died in the war, and sent home to my father by the King."

The eyeglass drops from the Governor's nose and his face straightens. After a moment of silence the High Bailiff says:

"What you say of the captain—is it from hearsay or from personal experience?"

"From personal experience, sir."

There is another moment of silence and then the High Bailiff says:

"Tell us."

Mona takes hold of the rail of the witness-box, and it is seen that her fingers are trembling. She tries to begin, but at first the words will not come. At length, lifting her eyes as if saying to herself, "Oh, what matter about me?" she tells the story of the captain's attempt at a criminal assault upon her; how, late at night, when she was alone and unprotected he had tried to force his way into her house and had almost overcome her resistance when Oskar Heine came

up and laid hold of him by the throat and flung him back into the road.

"So if there's any spite," she says, "it's not Heine's against the captain, but the captain's against Heine."

There is a dead hush in the court-house until she has done. Then the High Bailiff looks down at Oskar, who is still standing by the witness-box, and says:

"Is this true?"

Oskar answers in a husky voice:

"I'm sorry the young lady has said it, sir, but it's true, perfectly true."

"It's a lie," shouts the captain, tossing up his red face defiantly.

"Is it?" cries Oskar quickly. And then throwing out his arm and pointing to the captain, he says:

"Look at him. The marks of my hands are on his throat at this moment."

Instantly the captain drops his chin into his breast, but not before everybody on the bench has seen the black stamp of four

fingers and a thumb on the man's red throat.

The advocate for the defence rises and asks permission (things having gone so far) to call the other prisoners.

One by one the five are called and tell the same story—that when the horse-racing began the captain, who went to Belle Vue nearly every afternoon, enticed them to trust him with their stakes; but though they found out afterwards that their horses had often won, he had always lied to them and kept their money.

"Heine advised us to complain to the Commandant, but we decided to strip the man and search his pockets, and having a drop to drink we went further than we intended."

"It's a pack of lies," roars the captain.

"No, it's not that neither," says a voice from behind the prisoners.

It is one of the guard who had brought the men to court, and stepping out of the

bench at the back of the dock, he says :

" Swear me next, your Worship."

" Take care what you're saying, Radcliffe," cries the captain in a voice that is almost unintelligible from anger. " No lies here, remember."

" No, I've told enough for you at the camp. I'm going to tell the truth for once, Captain."

The soldier corroborates the evidence of the prisoners, and adds that the guard themselves have been similarly cheated, blackmailed and bullied.

" More than that, it's the captain himself who has been bringing drink into the camp, especially into the millionaires' compound. He is making a big purse out of it, too, and only two nights ago, when he was in liquor, he boasted that he had five hundred pounds in the bank already."

After that the proceedings are brought to a quick conclusion, the Governor being

afraid of further disclosures. The six men are sentenced to one day's imprisonment, but having been as long as that in custody already they are acquitted.

And then the trial being over, the Commandant addresses the captain, telling him he is not to return to the camp, but to prepare to be sent over the water to-morrow morning.

"It's a few men like you who give the enemy their excuse for saying we are as bad as they are."

The court having risen, the prisoners are taken out between their guard. Oskar Heine passes close to the place where Mona is standing, but he does not raise his eyes to her.

Only then, her excitement being over, does Mona realize what she has done for herself. The townspeople are surging out of the court-house, and, as they go, they are casting black looks at her. She awaits until she thinks they are gone, and then, ventur-

ing out, she finds a throng of them, women as well as men, on the steps and about the gate, and they fall on her with insults.

"Here she comes!" "The traitor!" "It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest." "The woman might have held her tongue, anyway; not given away her own countryman to save a dirty Boche."

A hiss that is like the sound of water boiling over hot stones follows her down the street and out of the town, until she reaches the country.

Half-way home she is overtaken by the Commandant in his motor-car. He stops to speak to her, and his kind face looks serious, almost stern.

"I'm willing to believe that what you did was done in the interest of justice, but all the same I'm sorry for you, my girl, very sorry."

The six prisoners have arrived at the camp before her, and a report of what she has done at the trial has passed with the speed of

a forest fire over the five compounds. As she walks up the avenue, hardly able to support herself, the brutal sailors of the Second Compound, the same that had formerly offended her by their vulgar familiarity, rush to the barbed wire to lift their caps to her. She does not look at them, but hurries into the house, overwhelmed with shame and confusion.

To get through the work of the day is hard, and when night comes she drops into her father's seat by the fire and sits there for hours, forgetting that she has eaten nothing since morning.

It is all over. The secret she has been struggling so hard to hide even from herself, denying it over and over again to her conscience, she has proclaimed aloud in public.

She loves this German—she who had hated all his race as no one else had ever hated them! Everybody knows it, too, and everybody loathes her. And her father—if she had killed her father before, as people

said, she has killed him a second time that day, covering his very grave with disgrace.

"I couldn't help it," she thinks, but that brings her no comfort now.

At one moment she tells herself that since she has renounced her race she must run away somewhere—she cannot live at Knockaloe any longer. But then she thinks of Oskar, that he must remain, and cries in her heart:

"I can't! I can't!"

And remembering what Oskar had said about her in court she throws up her head and thinks:

"Why should I?"

When the time comes to lock up the house for the night she finds a letter which has been pushed under the door. It is on prisoners' notepaper and in a handwriting she has never seen before, and it contains three words only:

"*God bless you!*"

Instantly, instinctively, she lifts it to her lips and kisses it. But at the next moment, as she is going upstairs, the old weakness comes sweeping back on her.

"I couldn't help it! I couldn't help it! God forgive me!"

NINTH CHAPTER

It is Christmas week again—the last Christmas of the war. Two Swiss doctors, appointed by the warring nations to inspect the Internment Camps throughout Europe, have arrived at Knockaloe.

After going the rounds of the five compounds they come to the farm to test the milk. They are pleasant men, and Mona asks them to take tea.

Sitting at the table in the kitchen they talk together, not paying much attention to Mona, of the complaints made by the prisoners, particularly by one of them, who had said he had not been able to eat the potatoes provided because they had been full of maggots, whereupon the sergeant of the guard, who had been showing them round, had cried :

" Don't believe a word of it—the man's a

liar," and then the prisoner had said no more.

"I dare say the fellow was lying all right," says one of the doctors, "but that sergeant is a bit of a beast."

"Is it like that in all the camps—in Germany, for instance?" asks Mona.

"Worse there than anywhere. Some of the officers in German camps are barbarians without bowels of compassion for anybody, and some of your British prisoners are living the lives of the damned."

"But that's the devilish way of war. It seems to make martyrs and heroes of the men who lose by it, and brutes and demons of the men who win."

"Not always, my friend."

"No, not always, thank God!"

After that they turn to Mona, congratulating her on the cleanliness of her dairy, and asking her what help she has to keep things going. Being afraid to speak of Oskar, she tells them she is alone.

"Wonderful!" says one of them. "But it's what I always say—one person working with his heart will do more than ten who are working with their hands only."

"It's the same on the battlefield," says the other. "And that's why this country has won the war, and the Germans have lost it."

"Lost it?" says Mona. "Is the war over, then?"

"It soon will be, my girl. Your enemy may make a last kick, but the war cannot last much longer."

Mona's heart leaps up. Can it be possible that the war is coming to an end? Then it will soon be well with her and Oskar.

It is not because Oskar is a German, but because the Germans are at war with her own people that her people look black at her. It is war, not race, that is the great obstacle to their love, and when the war is over the obstacle will be gone.

"O Lord, stop the war, stop it, stop it," she prays every night and every morning.

There are to be no carols this Christmas, but special services are to be held in the camp on Christmas Day, and a great Lutheran preacher is coming to conduct them.

On Christmas Eve Mona is carrying a bowl of oats to a young bull she has put out on the mountain, when she hears the singing of a hymn in the prison chapel and she stops to listen. It must be the prisoner-choir practising for to-morrow's service, and it must be Oskar who is playing the harmonium.

"*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott . . .*"

The language is unknown to her, but the tune is familiar; she used to sing it herself when she was in the choir of the Wesleyan Chapel:

"*A sure stronghold our God is still . . .*"

The same hymn, the same religion, the

same God, the same Saviour, and yet . . . How wicked! How stupid!

On Christmas morning Mona has finished her work in the dairy when she hears the far-off sound of the church bells in Peel, and looking out over the camp she sees groups of the prisoners (Oskar among them) making their way to the prison chapel.

Suddenly, as she thinks, a new thought comes to her. If it is the same religion, why shouldn't she go to the service? If the guard will permit her to pass, why shouldn't she?

Almost before she is aware of what she is doing she has run upstairs, changed into her chapel clothes, and is crossing the avenue towards the gate of the Third Compound.

The camp chapel (half church, half theatre) is a large wooden barn with a stage at one end, no seats on the floor. On the stage, behind a small deal table, the Lutheran pastor, in a black gown, is reading the lesson from his big Bible. On the

floor in front of him are five or six hundred men, all standing in lines. They make a pitiful spectacle—some young (almost boys), some elderly (almost old), some wearing good clothes, some in rags, some well shod, some with their naked feet showing through the holes in their worn-out shoes, some with fine clear-cut features, and some with faces degraded by drink and debased by crime. Every eye is on the pastor, and there is no sound in the bare place but the sound of his voice.

The silence is broken by the lifting of the latch of a door near to the stage. At the next moment a woman enters. Everybody knows her—it is "the Woman of Knockaloe." She stands for a moment as if dazed by the eyes that are on her, and then somebody by her side (she knows who it is, although she does not look at him) touches her arm and leads her to a chair, which has been hurriedly brought in from an ante-room and placed in the middle of the front row.

When the lesson is finished the pastor gives out a hymn. It is the same hymn as she heard last night, but after the man from the door has stepped forward and played the overture on the harmonium, she finds herself on her feet in the midst of the prisoners.

In full, clear, resonant voices the men are singing in their German, when suddenly they become aware that a woman is singing with them in English—the same hymn to the same tune.

"*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott . . .*"

"*A sure stronghold our God is still . . .*"

The voices of the men sink for a moment, as if they are listening, and then, as by one spontaneous impulse, they rise and swell until the place seems to throb with them.

When the hymn comes to an end Mona sits and the pastor begins his sermon. She can understand only a word of it now and again, and her eyes wander to the door.

Oskar is there. His head is up and his eyes are shining.

"O Lord, stop the war, stop it, stop it!"

Summer has come again; the sun rises and sets, the birds sing and nest, the landscape preserves its solemn peace, but still the war goes on. The last kick of the enemy, which the Swiss doctors had foreseen, has been made and it is over. After a devastating advance, there has been a still more devastating retreat.

The prisoners in the camp know all about it. Their spirits had risen and fallen according to the fortunes of their armies at the front. At first they were truculent. They talked braggingly about vast German forces marching upon London, blowing up Buckingham Palace, putting an end to the British Empire, and then turning their attention to America. Afterwards they were sceptical. If the English newspapers reported German defeats they knew better, having received

their German newspapers which reported German victories. Now they are sullen. What is the war about, anyway? Nothing at all! In ten years' time nobody will know what was the cause of it!

Mona is in a fever of excitement. Is the war coming to an end at last? What does Oskar think? Why doesn't he come to her? Is he still thinking he has brought trouble enough on her already?

At length he comes. It is late at night. She hears his voice calling to her in a tremulous tone from the other side of the open door.

"Mona!"

He has never called her by that name before.

"Yes?"

She is standing on the threshold, trembling from head to foot, never before having been face to face with him since the night of her father's seizure.

"It's all over, Mona."

"What is, Oskar?"

"Germany is beaten. The Hindenburg line is broken, and revolution has begun in Berlin."

"Does that mean that the war will soon be at an end?"

"It must be."

She hesitates for a moment, then she says, with a quivering at her heart:

"But surely you are glad of that, Oskar —that the war will soon be at an end?"

He looks into her face and then turns away his own.

"I don't know. I can't say," he answers.

She looks after him as he goes off. Her eyes gleam and her heart throbs.

TENTH CHAPTER

The tenth of November, nineteen hundred and eighteen. All day long there has been great commotion in the officers' quarters. The telephone with Government Office has been going constantly since early morning, and there has been much hurrying to and fro.

An internment camp is like a desert in one thing—rumour passes over it on the wings of the wind. Before midday every prisoner knows everything. The Kaiser has been hurled from his throne by his own people; the German command have asked for an armistice, and the Allied Commander-in-Chief has given them until nine o'clock to-morrow to sign the terms of peace he has prepared for them.

If they do not sign within that time the

war will go on to extermination. If they do, the news will be flashed over the world immediately. At eleven o'clock they will have it at Knockaloe. The guns will be fired in the fort at Douglas, the sirens will be sounded from the steamers in the bay, and the church bells will be rung all over the island.

Mona is in raptures. The war is near to an end, and all she has prayed for is about to come to pass. Yet even at that moment she is conscious of conflicting feelings. When she thinks of Robbie, she wants to shout with joy that the war has come to a right ending, and the cruel enemy who made it, with all its barbarities and horrors, is humbled to the dust. But when she thinks of Oskar, she feels . . . she does not know what she feels.

Where *is* Oskar?

She awakes next morning before the day has dawned and while the arc-lamps are still

burning. The first thing she is aware of is a deep murmur, like that of the sea on a quiet but sullen day, which seems to come from all parts of the camp. It was the last thing she had been conscious of when she fell asleep the night before. The prisoners were then walking to and fro in their compounds, in and out of the sinister shadows, and talking, talking, talking. Could it be possible that they had walked and talked all night long?

What wonder? The day that was about to dawn might be the day of doom for them. When night came again their Fatherland might have fallen; they might be men without a country—mere outcasts thrown on to an overburdened world.

When the day breaks and the arc-lamps are put out, Mona sees the men moving about like wraiths in the grey light. But silence has now fallen on them. The ordinary regulations of the camp have been relaxed for the day, and they are not

required to go to their workshops. When the bell rings for breakfast some of them forget they are hungry and remain in the open.

It is a November day like many another, fine and clear and cold and with occasional gleams of sunshine on the sea. The cows in the cow-house are lowing, the sheep on the hill are bleating. Nature is going on as usual.

Mona goes to her work in the dairy. When the men come for the milk, she can hardly bear to look into their drawn faces. The prisoners in the First Compound are standing in groups, and if they are talking at all it can only be in whispers. The sailors in the Second Compound are standing together in crowds, but the old riotous spirit is gone; there is no more shouting or swearing.

The hours drag on. Looking beyond the barbed wire boundary of the encampment, Mona sees country carts rattling down the

high road at a fast trot as if going to a fair. Somebody is on the church tower of Kirk Patrick doing something with the flagstaff.

At half-past ten the world seems to be standing still. The camp is on tiptoe. All over it men are looking towards Douglas. Their faces are grim, almost ghastly. They seem to be rooted to the ground. Sometimes one of them digs his foot into the earth like a restless horse tired of waiting, but that is the only movement.

Where is Oskar? What is he doing?

At length, at long length, there is a certain activity in the officers' quarters. Mona distinctly hears the ringing of the telephone bell in the Commandant's tent, which is not far from the farm-house. In the quiet air and the dead silence she believes she hears the Commandant's voice.

"Hello! Who's there? Government office? . . . Well? . . . Signed, is it? Good!"

At the same moment she hears the strik-

ing of the clock at Peel. And before the clock has finished striking there comes the deep boom of a gun.

There can be no mistaking that. It rolls down the valley from the direction of Douglas, strikes the hills on either side, and then sweeps over the black camp towards the sea.

A moment later comes the screaming of sirens, deadened by distance, then the ringing of church bells, now far, now near, and then the dull sound of wild cheering at Peel, where the people, who have been waiting from early morning in the market place, are going frantic in their joy, clasping each other's hands and kissing.

The twenty-five thousand prisoners in the camp stand silent and breathless for a moment. The worst has happened to them —their Fatherland has fallen.

The strain is broken by a ridiculous incident. A terrier bitch belonging to a German baron in the "millionaires'" quarters leaps up to the roof of his tent and begins to

bark furiously at the tumult in the air. The little creature's anger becomes amusing. The men look at the dog and then burst into peals of laughter.

A few minutes afterwards the prisoners of the First Compound have recovered themselves and are shaking hands and congratulating each other. After all the war is over and they will soon be free! Free to leave this place and go back home—home to their houses and their wives and children.

The sailors in the Second Compound are going crazy with delight and behaving like demented creatures. They are laughing and singing at the top of their lungs, punching each other and boxing, playing leap-frog and turning cart-wheels. What does it matter about country? Who cares about the Fatherland, anyway? All the world is their country—all the world and the sea.

Mona is standing at the door of her dairy, quivering with emotion. She is like a woman possessed. What she has hoped for

and prayed for has come to pass at last. Peace! Peace! Peace over all the earth! Never has the world had such a chance before. Never will it have such a chance again. The cruelties and barbarities of war will be no more heard of, and the senseless jealousies and hatreds of races will be wiped out for ever. And then . . . and then . . .

All at once she becomes aware of somebody behind her. She knows who it is, but she does not turn. There is a moment of silence between them, and then, in a voice which she can scarcely control, she says, half-crying, half-laughing:

"You, too, will be free to go home soon, Oskar. Aren't you glad?"

There is another moment of silence between them, and then in a low, tremulous voice Oskar answers:

"No, you know I'm not, Mona."

Mona drops her hand to her side, partly behind her, and at the next moment she feels it tightened in a quivering grasp.

ELEVENTH CHAPTER

A MONTH has passed, yet the camp looks much the same as before. Mona had expected that the prisoners would be liberated by this time, but they are here still. The Commandant is said to be waiting for orders.

Meantime regulations have been relaxed. The men are no longer restricted to the various compounds. There is no limit to their liberty of moving about, except the big gates, guarded by soldiers, and the three lines of barbed wire by which the camp is surrounded. Why not? Nobody is likely to attempt to escape. Within a few weeks everybody will be free.

Mona has all the help she can do with now. The prisoners are constantly about the farm-house, doing anything they can for

her. They show her photographs of their wives and children and get her to count up the savings that are coming to them.

At length comes word that the Peace Congress has begun and that the Commandant has received his orders. Two hundred and fifty of the prisoners are to be sent over the water every day until the camp is empty.

But there is a condition attaching to the liberation. Mona hears of it first from three prisoners belonging to distant compounds, who are talking outside the house. To her surprise they are speaking not only in English, but in British dialects.

"They ca' me a Jarmin," says one, "but what am I? I were browt to Owdham when I were five year owd and now 'am fifty, so 'am five year Jarmin and forty-five English. Yet they're sending me back to Jarmany."

"I'm no so sure but my case isna war' nor that, though," says the other. "I

came to Glasgie when I was a bairn in my mither's arms, and I've lived there all my life. I married there and my two sons were born there. And now that I've lost both of them fighting in the British army, and my wife's dead of a broken heart and I've nobody left belonging to me, they're for sending me back to a foreign country."

"Aw well," says the third man, speaking with a smatch of the Anglo-Manx, "I wouldn't trust but my case is worse nor either of yours. I'm German born, that's truth enough, but I've lived in this very island since I was a lump of a lad, and maybe I'm as Manx myself as some ones they make magistrates and judges of. More than that, my only son was born here, and when he grew up to be a fine young fellow, and they said his King and country needed him, he was one of the first to join up and go off to the war. Well, what d'ye think? Twelve month ago he was wounded and invalided home, and then, being no use for

foreign service, they sent him to Knockaloe as one of the guard—to guard, among others, his own father. Think of that now! My son outside the barbed wire and me inside! And one of these days he'll have to march me down to Douglas and ship me off to Germany, where I've neither chick nor child, no kith nor kin . . . Yes, *my* lad, that I used to carry on my back and rock in his cradle!"

Mona is aghast. Something seems to creep between her skin and her flesh. Never before, in all the long agony of the war, with its blood and tears and terror, has she heard of anything so cruel. What a mockery of the Almighty! Race, race, race! Mother and author of half the wars of the world—when, oh when would the Father of all living wipe the blasphemous word out of the mouths of Christian men?

But the conversation Mona has overheard cuts deeper and closer than that even. If all

German-born prisoners are to be sent back to Germany, Oskar will have to go, and what *then?*

That night a knock comes to her door. It is Oskar himself. His eyes are wild and his lips are trembling.

"You've heard of the new order?" he asks.

"Yes. Will you have to go back also?"

"I must. I suppose I must."

The first batch to go are from the "millionaires'" quarters. Being rich they have reconciled themselves to the conditions. Park Lane or the Thiergarten—what matter which? In their black clothes, their spats and fur-lined coats, and with their suit-cases packed in a truck, they march off merrily.

The next to go are from the Second Compound, and they make a different picture—ill-clad, ill-shod, without an overcoat among them, with nothing in their pockets except the little money they have drawn at the last

moment from the camp bank, and nothing in their hands except the canvas bags which contain all their belongings.

It is a miserable January morning, with drizzling rain and a thick mist over the mountains. At a sharp word of command the men go tramping towards the gate, a silent and melancholy lot, totally unlike the singing and swaggering gang who came up the avenue four years ago.

Later in the day the captain of the guard (the new captain) who has seen the men off by the steamer tells Mona a wretched story. The prisoners had passed through Douglas with heads down like men going to execution; they had been drawn up like sheep on the pier, while the ordinary passengers went aboard to their cabins, and then they had been hurried down the gangway to the steerage quarters. And as the steamer moved away they had looked back with longing eyes at the island they were leaving behind them.

"Poor devils! They used to talk about the camp as a hell, but inside six months they'll be ready to crawl on their stomachs to get back to it."

"But why . . . why are they all to be sent to Germany?" asks Mona.

"It's the order of the congress, miss. No country wants to harbour its enemies—not a second time—unless they have something to make them friends."

"But if they have?"

"Well, if a German has an English wife and an English business . . ."

"They let him remain—do they?"

"I believe they do, miss."

Mona's heart leaps, and a new thought comes to her. If Oskar does not wish to go back to Germany, why shouldn't he stay here and farm Knockaloe?

Next morning, after the third gang has gone, she is on her way to her landlord's. Her last half-year's rent is due, and then

there's the question of the lease, which runs out in November.

It is a beautiful morning with blue sky and bright sunshine. The snowdrops are beginning to peep and the yellow eyes of the gorse are showing. As she goes down the road with a high step she is thinking of her landlord's answer to her father when, four years ago, he asked what was to happen to the farm after the war was over: "Don't trouble about that. You are here for life, Robert—you and your children."

She meets her landlord at the gate of his house. He is in his church-going clothes, having just returned from Peel, where he has been sitting on the bench as a magistrate.

"The rent, I suppose?" he says, and he leads her into the sitting-room.

She counts it out to him in Treasury notes, and he gives her a receipt for it. Then he rises and makes for the door, as if

wishing to be rid of her. She keeps her seat and says:

"What about the lease, sir?"

"We'll not talk about that to-day," says the landlord.

"I'm afraid we must. I have to make important arrangements."

The landlord looks embarrassed.

"But if you say it will be all right when the time comes, we can leave it for the present, sir," says Mona.

The landlord, who has reached the door and is holding it open, puts on a bold front and says:

"Well, to tell you the truth, I've had to make other arrangements."

Mona is thunderstruck, and she rises rigidly.

"You don't mean to say, sir, that you are . . . are letting the farm over my head?"

"And if I am, why shouldn't I? It's mine, I suppose, and I can do what I like with it."

"But you promised my father—faithfully promised him when the farm was turned into a camp . . ."

"Circumstances alter cases. Your father is dead and so is his son. . . ."

"But his daughter is alive, and what has she done . . ."

"Don't ask me what she's done, miss."

"But I do, sir, I do."

"Then if you must have it, you must. I want a good man of my own race to farm my land, not an enemy alien."

Mona is speechless for one moment, choking with anger; at the next she is back on the road, weeping bitterly.

Oskar is in the avenue when she returns to it, and seeing she is in trouble he speaks to her.

She tells him what has happened, omitting what was said about himself.

"Your family have lived in Knockaloe for generations, haven't they?" he says.

"Four generations."

"And you were born there, weren't you?"

"Yes."

"It's a shame—a damned shame."

Mona is crushed. Knockaloe is lost to her. And this is the peace she has prayed and prayed for!

One day passes, then another. Every morning Mona sees a fresh batch of prisoners leaving the camp, and her heart sinks at the sight of them. Oskar's turn will come some day. It tears her to pieces to think of it—Oskar going off at that melancholy pace, down the avenue and round by Kirk Patrick.

At length a spirit of defiance takes possession of her. Knockaloe is dear to her by a thousand memories, but it is not the only place on the island. She has heard of a farm in the north that is to be let in November. It is large, therefore it is not everybody who can stock it, but *she* can, because she has

always thought it her duty to put everything she has earned during the war into cattle to meet the requirements of the camp.

She is upstairs in her bedroom, making ready for a visit to the northern landlord, when she hears the loud clatter of hoofs in the avenue. Long John Corlett, who used to come courting her for the sake of the stock, is riding a heavy cart-horse up to the house. He sees her and, without troubling to dismount, he calls to her to come down. Resenting his impudence, she makes him wait, but at length she goes out to him.

"Well, what is it, John Corlett?"

"You'll have heard, my girl, that I'm the new tenant of Knockaloe?"

"I haven't; but if you are, what of it?"

"I've come to ask you how long you want to stay."

"Until the lease runs out—what else do you expect, sir?"

"But why should you? The camp will

be empty before that time comes, and what can you do with your milk when the men are gone?"

"I can do what I did before they came, if you want to know."

"Oh, no, you can't. You've lost your milk run, and you can never get it back again."

"Who says I can't?"

"I say so. Everybody says so. Ask anybody you like, woman—any of your old customers."

Mona is colouring up to the eyes.

"Then tell them I don't care if I never can," she says, and turns back to the house.

"Wait! There's something else, though. What about the dilapidations?"

"Dilapidations?"

"According to the agreement with the Government the landlord has to make good the damage to the houses and the tenant the injury to the land."

It is true—she had forgotten all about it.

"Twenty-five thousand men here for four years—it will take something to put the land into cultivation."

In a halting voice she asks Corlett what he thinks it will cost, and he mentions a monstrous figure.

"Three years' rent of the farm—that's the best I can make it."

Mona gasps and her face becomes white.

"But that would leave me without a shilling," she says.

"Tut, woman! With the big rent you've had from the Government you must have a nice little nest-egg somewhere."

"But I haven't. I've put everything into stock."

The hulking fellow slaps his leg with his riding whip and makes a long whistle.

"Well, so much the better if it's all on the land."

Then he drops from his saddle to the ground, and comes close to Mona as if to coax her.

"Look here, Mona woman, no one shall say John Corlett is a hard man. Leave everything on the farm as it stands, and we'll cry quits this very minute."

Mona looks at him in silence for a moment. Then she says, breathing rapidly:

"John Corlett, do you want to turn me out of my father's farm a beggar and a pauper?"

"Chut, girl, what's the odds? There's somebody will be wanting you to follow him to foreign parts when he goes himself—though you might have done better at home, I'm thinking."

Mona's breath comes hot and fast and her face grows crimson. Then she falls on the man like a fury.

"Out of this, you robber, you thief, you dirt!"

The big bully leaps back into his saddle. Snatching at his reins, he shouts that if she won't listen to reason he will "put the law on her," and not a beast shall she take off

the land until his dues as incoming tenant are paid to him.

"Out of it!" cries Mona, and she lifts up a stick that lies near to her.

Seeing it swinging in the air and likely to fall on him, the man tugs at his reins to swirl out of reach of the blow, and the stick falls on his horse's flank. The horse throws up her hind legs, leaps forward, and goes down the avenue at a gallop.

The rider has as much as he can do to keep his seat, and the last that is seen of him (shouting something about "you and your Boche") is of his hindmost parts bobbing up and down as his horse dashes through the gate and up the road towards home.

Some of the guard who have been looking on and listening burst into roars of laughter. Mona bursts into tears and goes indoors. If her stock is to be taken, the island, as well as Knockaloe, is lost to her!

Late that night Oskar comes again.

His eyes are fierce and his face is twitching.

"I've heard what happened," he says, "and if I were a free man I should break every bone in the blackguard's skin. But I can't let you go on suffering like this for me. You must give me up, Mona."

It is the first time an open acknowledgment of their love has passed between them. Mona is confused for a moment. Then she says,

"Do you *want* me to give you up, Oskar?"

He does not answer.

"To see you go away with the rest, and to think no more about you?"

Still he does not answer.

"Do you?"

"God knows I don't," he says, and at the next moment he is gone.

TWELFTH CHAPTER

THREE nights later Oskar comes again. As usual he will not enter the house, so she has to stand at the door to speak to him. His eyes are bright and he is eager and excited.

"Mona, I have something to suggest to you."

"Yes?"

"It's not to be wondered at that people brought up in a little island like this should have these hard feelings and narrow ideas. But the English are not like that. They are a great, great people, and if you are willing to go with me to England. . . ."

"What are you thinking of, Oskar?"

He tells her more about himself than she has ever yet heard. He is an electrical engineer, and before being brought to Knockaloe he had been chief engineer to a

big English company on the Mersey, at a salary of a thousand a year. When the war broke out his sympathies had been dead against his own country, chiefly because of "that quack, the Kaiser."

"Oskar!"

"It's true. I can't account for it. I was secretly ashamed of it in those days, but I would have joined up in the British Army if they would have had me. They wouldn't!"

On the contrary, the authorities had called him up for internment. Then his firm, which had been loath to lose him, had tried to obtain his exemption. They had failed, and when the time came for him to go the chairman of the company had said: "Heine, we're sorry you have to leave us, but if you want to come back when the war is over, your place will be waiting for you."

"But could he . . . do you think it possible. . . ."

"Certain! Oh, he's a great old man,

Mona, and if he were to break his word to me I should lose faith in human nature. So I . . . I. . . ."

"Well?"

"I intend to write to him, telling him I shall soon be at liberty, and if you will only agree to go with me. . . ."

He stops, seeing tears in her eyes. Then, in a husky voice, he says:

"I'm sorry to ask you to leave your island."

"It is turning me out, Oskar; that's the bitterest part of it."

"Then you *will* go to England with me?"

"Yes," she says, and he hurries off in high spirits to write his letter.

During the next week Mona tries hard to feel happy, but little by little vague doubts oppress her. One day she overhears scraps of a conversation between the Commandant and the Governor, who are arranging for the breaking up of the camp and the disposal of

its portable property. As they stand in the avenue they are talking about the Peace Conference.

"It's a pity," the Commandant is saying, "but it has always been my experience that the first years of a peace are worse than the last years of a war."

And the Governor is answering: "All the same, we should be fools to trust those traitors again. We have beaten the German brutes, and what we have got to do now is to keep them beaten."

"I'm not like that, your Excellency," says the Commandant. "I'll fight my enemy with the best, but when the fighting is over I want to forget and, if I can, forgive. I was at the front in the early days, and after a bad bit of an engagement I came upon a German officer in a shell hole. He was in a terrible state, poor fellow, and we couldn't take him in, so I decided to stay with him. His mind was perfectly clear, and he said, 'Colonel' (I was colonel in

those days), 'don't you think this is strange?' 'What's strange?' I asked. 'Well,' said he, 'if you and I had met in the trenches I suppose you would have tried to kill me for the sake of Motherland, and I should have tried to kill you for the sake of Fatherland, yet here you are trying to save me for the sake of . . . Brotherland.' More of the same kind he said in those last hours, and when the end came he was in my arms and his head was on my breast, and I don't mind telling you I . . . I kissed him."

Mona felt a thrill going through and through her. Brotherland! That was what all the world would be soon. And then Oskar and she, living in Liverpool, in their great love would be happy and unashamed.

That night Oskar comes back. His face is pale and his lips are quivering. He tries to speak, but finding it hard to do so he hands her a letter. It is from the engineering firm on the Mersey.

SIR,—We have received your letter of the 10th inst. addressed to our late chairman, who died during the war, and regret to say in reply to your request that you should be taken back in your former position, that it is now filled to our satisfaction by another engineer, and that even if it were vacant we should find it impossible to re-engage you for the reason that feeling against the Germans is so strong among British workmen that none of them would be willing to serve under you, and the fact that you had married an English wife, as you say, would increase, not lessen, their hostility.

Yours, etc.

"I wouldn't have believed it," says Oskar.

"It's the war," says Mona. "Will it never, never end?"

"Never," says Oskar, and he turns away with clenched teeth.

Mona goes to bed that night with a heavy

heart. If English workmen will not work with Oskar, England, also, is closed to them, and Brotherland is a cruel dream.

Another week passes. The disbanding of the camp goes on as usual, with its toll of two hundred and fifty men daily. The Fourth and Second Compounds are now beginning to be called upon. The men of the Third are being kept to the last, because many of them, like Oskar, are engineers, and therefore useful in removing the electric plant, which is to be sold separately. But their turn will come soon and then . . . what *then?*

A week later Oskar comes again. His face is thin and pinched and his eyes are bleared as from want of sleep, but his spirits are high, almost hysterical.

"Mona," he says, "I know what we have to do."

"What?"

"The English may be hard and

unforgiving, but the Germans are not like that."

"The Germans?"

"Oh, I know my people. They may fight like fiends and demons—they do, I know they do—but when the fighting is over they are willing to be friends with their enemies."

"What are you thinking of now, Oskar?" says Mona, but she sees what is coming.

"If you were willing . . . if you could only find it possible to go with me to Germany . . ."

"Germany?"

Mona feels dizzy.

"It's a sin and a shame to ask you to leave your native country, Mona, but since it is turning you out, as you say . . ."

Mona is covering her ears.

"Don't speak of it, Oskar. I can't listen to you! It's impossible."

Oskar is silent for a moment, then he says in a tremulous voice:

"I would make it up to you, Mona. Yes, I swear to God I should make it up to you. I should dedicate every day and hour of my life to make it up to you. You should never regret it—never for one single moment."

"But how could I go . . ."

"Just as other women are going. Lots of the men are taking their German wives back with them. Why shouldn't I take my English wife?"

"Wife?"

"Certainly. The chaplain would marry us."

"The chaplain?"

"Yes, in the camp chapel, late at night or early in the morning, with two of my comrades as witnesses."

"Have you spoken to him, then?"

"I have, and he says that being made in a Lutheran church by a Lutheran clergyman, it would be a good marriage according to German law, so Germany would receive you."

"But where . . . where should we go to?"

"My mother's first."

"Your mother's?"

"Where else? Oh, she'd love it! She's the best mother a man ever had. Do you know, she has written to me every single week since I came here. And now she's only living to welcome me home."

"But, Oskar, are you sure she will . . ."

"Welcome you? Of course she will. She's growing old, poor soul, and has been lonely since my sister's death. After we're married I'll write to say I'm bringing another daughter home to love and comfort her. . . ."

"Write first, Oskar."

"As you please. It isn't necessary, though. I know quite well what she'll say. But even if she couldn't welcome you for yourself—and why shouldn't she?—she would for my sake, anyway."

"All the same, write first, Oskar."

"Very well, I will. And if her answer is all right, you'll go?"

"Ye-s."

"Heavens, how happy I am! What have I done to deserve to be so happy?"

Mona watches him as he goes off, with his quick step, until he is lost in the sinister shadows cast by the big arc-lamps that cut through the night. Then she goes indoors and tries to compose herself. It takes her a long time to do so, but at length, being in bed, she remembers a beautiful thing she had read to her father in the days when he lay upstairs:

"*Whither thou goest, I will go. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.*"

For days after that Mona finds herself singing as she goes about her work. And at night, when she is alone, she is always thinking of her forthcoming life in Oskar's home. She can scarcely remember her own mother, except that she was an invalid for years,

but she sees herself nursing Oskar's mother, now that she is old and has lost her daughter.

"I mustn't go empty-handed, though," she thinks.

That brings back the memory of long John Corlett and his threat of "putting the law" on her.

It must have been stuff and nonsense about the dilapidations eating up the stock, but she will see an advocate and have things settled up immediately.

"I'm afraid the man is right, miss."

It is the advocate whom Mona is consulting.

"It was a bad bargain your poor father made with the Government, and the only people likely to profit by it are the landlord and the incoming tenant."

"Then what do you advise me to do, sir?"

"Sell up your stock, have the dilapida-

tions valued, pay the money due, and start afresh on whatever is left."

"Do it for me at once, please," says Mona, and she sets off home with an easy, if not a happy, mind.

But hardly has she got there and changed into her dairy clothes, and begun on her evening milking in the cow-house, with the watery winter sun coming in on her through the open door, when she sees Oskar approaching with a look that strikes to her heart. His face is white, almost ghastly, and he is walking like an old man, bent and feeble.

"What has happened?"

"There! What do you think of that?" he says, and with a grating laugh he gives her a letter.

"Is it from your mother?"

"Look at it."

"Is she refusing to receive me?"

"Read it. It's written in English—for your benefit, apparently."

Mona reads:

"OSKAR,—The contents of your letter have distressed me beyond measure. That a son of mine should think of marrying an Englishwoman—one of the vile and wicked race that killed his sister—is the most shocking thing that has ever happened to me in my life."

There is more of the same kind—that if Oskar attempts to bring his Englishwoman to Germany his mother will refuse to receive her; that if she did receive her every self-respecting German woman would cry shame on her and shun her house for ever; that the feeling in Germany against the abominable English is so bitter, because of their brutal methods of warfare and their barbarous ideas of peace (starving hundreds of German children by their infamous blockade, drowning German sailors under the sea in their submarines, burning German airmen alive in

the air, and now ruining everybody by crushing demands for reparations which will leave Germany a nation of beggars), that no decent house would shelter any of them.

"Tell your Englishwoman from me that if she marries you and comes to this country she will be as a leper whom nobody will touch. Never shall she cross this threshold! Oskar, my son, I love you, and I have waited all this time for you; I am old, too, and have not much longer to live, but rather than hear you had married an Englishwoman I would see you dead and buried."

When Mona looks up from the letter, Oskar is gazing into her face with a ghastly smile.

"That's a nice thing to send a fellow after four years' imprisonment, isn't it?" he says, and then he breaks into heart-breaking laughter.

"I was so sure of her, too. I thought

she would do anything for me—anything."

Again he laughs—wildly, fiercely.

"What has happened to the woman? Has the accursed war taken all the heart out of her? The German people, too—have they all gone mad? Starving German children, drowning German sailors, burning German airmen! Good Lord, has the whole nation gone crazy?"

Mona feels as if she were choking.

"She is old and hasn't much longer to live, and just because I'm going to marry the best girl in the world and take her home with me . . ."

But his laughter breaks into sobs and he can say no more. Mona feels the tears in her throat as well as in her eyes, but at length she says:

"Oskar, it's all my fault. I've come between you. You must go home without me—to your country and your mother."

Oskar lifts his broken face and cries:

"Country? Mother? I've got no country and no mother either. Go home to them? Never! Never in this world!"

At the next moment he has gone off, with long strides, before Mona can reach out her hand to stop him.

Being alone, she has to go on with her work as usual—the "creatures" have to be milked and foddered. But after the men from the compounds have been served (only three of them now) she has time to think out her situation.

Since Oskar's mother refuses to receive her, Germany also is closed to them. Because she loves Oskar, and Oskar loves her, and they are of different races and their nations have been at war, they are to be hunted through the world as outcasts, and no place is to be left for them.

"Poor Oskar! It's hardest for him, though," she thinks.

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

THE men of the Fourth and Fifth Compounds, three-quarters of the guard and many of the officers have gone, when a stranger comes to the camp to make a bid for the purchase of the booths and huts.

After a tour of the wooden buildings he arrives at the farm-yard, and steps on to the mounting-block to take a general view, and at the same moment Mona comes to the door of her dairy.

He is an American, a cheerful and rather free-spoken person, and he says, with a smile on his lips, by way of excuse for opening a conversation:

"I guess the farm-house is not for sale, is it?"

"You must ask the landlord about that, sir," says Mona.

"Not you also? You're the tenant of the farm, aren't you?"

"Yes, but I'm leaving it presently."

"Ah, I remember! I've heard something about you. And where are you going to when you leave here?"

"I don't know yet, sir."

He looks at her as if measuring her from head to foot, and then says, with another smile:

"Come to my country, girlie. We have some strapping young women out west, but we can do with a few more of the same sort, I guess."

Mona is startled. Obvious as the word is, it comes like an inspiration. America! "The melting-pot of the nations!" All the races of the world are there. They must live in peace together or life could not go on.

When Oskar comes that night she tells him what the stranger has said, and his big, heavy, sleepless eyes become bright and excited.

"Why not? Why shouldn't we? That great free country! What a relief to leave all the d——d mess of this life in Europe behind us!"

There is a difficulty, though. He has heard that America refuses to admit people who have been in prison. He has been four years in an internment camp—will America allow him to land? He must ask the chaplain.

The following night Oskar comes back with a still brighter face.

"It's all right, Mona. Internment is not imprisonment in the eyes of American law."

But there is one other difficulty. America requires that every immigrant shall have something in his pocket to prevent him from becoming a burden on the new country.

"It's not much, but I have too little. If I had been a free man I should have earned four thousand pounds in the time I've been here, but when I leave the camp I shall only have fifty."

Mona is overjoyed—at length *she* can do something.

"That's no difficulty at all, Oskar. The auction is to come off soon, and after I've paid what I owe I shall have enough for both of us."

It is the day before the auction, and Mona is gathering up the stock and bringing them down to the houses—the beasts she had put out on the grass, the "dry" cows that are stretched on their bellies chewing the cud, the sheep that are bleating, and the early lambs that are baa-ing.

She is going up the mountain to fetch the young bull to which she has taken a bowl of wheat twice a week throughout the winter. A new wave of hope has come to her, a golden radiance is shining in the future, and she is singing to herself as she climbs through the heather.

Suddenly, when she reaches the top of the hill, by the tower called "Corrin's Folly,"

she hears fierce animals snorting, and at the next moment sees that three bulls are fighting. One of them is her own young bull, small and lithe, the two others are old and large and black and have iron rings in their nostrils. She remembers the old ones. They belong to John Corlett, and must have leapt over the boundary to get at the young one, and are now goring it fearfully.

The fight is frightful. The young bull is bleeding horribly and trying to escape. It leaps over the wall of the little cemetery around the tower and makes for the land on the other side of it which goes down by a steep descent to precipitous cliffs, with the broad sea lying below at a terrible depth. But the old bulls, making hoarse noises from their nostrils, are following it up on either side and intercepting it. As often as the hunted animal runs to the right they gore it back to the left, and when it flies to the left they gore it back to the right.

At length the young bull stands for a

moment, with its wild eyes flashing fire and its face towards the cliffs. And then, with a loud snort as of despair and defiance, it bounds forward, gallops straight ahead, and leaps clear over the cliff-head into the sea. The old bulls look after it for a moment with heaving nostrils and dilated eyes, and then begin to graze as if nothing had happened.

Mona has stood helpless and trembling while the fight has lasted, and when it is over and she comes to herself she finds Oskar standing behind her. He has been working on the roof of the tower, to remove the electric wires which have been attached to it, and from there he has seen everything.

"It was horrible, wasn't it?"

"Horrible!"

"So cruel and cowardly."

"Yes," he says, from between his clenched teeth, "and so damnably human."

Mona looks at him. They go down the hill together without saying any more.

At last it has come, the day of the sale. The Commandant has permitted it to be held at the farm, although the camp is not yet entirely cleared. It is his last act before leaving, for he is going away that morning. Mona sees him driving off in his motor car, hardly recognizable in his civilian clothes. As he passes the farm-house he raises his hat to her—an English gentleman, every inch of him.

Towards eleven o'clock there is much commotion about the farmstead. The guards (they have had orders to help) are bringing the big beasts out of the houses into the "haggard" and driving the sheep and lambs into pens. There is a great deal of bleating and lowing. Mona, who is compelled to hear, but cannot bring herself to see what is going on, is indoors, trying not to look or listen.

At length there is the sound of voices. The Advocate, with the auctioneer and his clerk, are coming up the avenue, and behind

them are many farmers. Long John Corlett, in his chapel clothes, is prominent among the latter, talking and laughing and hobnobbing with everybody. Mona sees the look of impudent certainty in the man's empty face. She also sees Oskar, who is behind the barbed wire of the Third Compound, with a face that is white and fierce.

After a short period for inspection the auction begins. The Advocate reads the conditions of sale (the whole of the stock on the farm is to be sold without reserve), and then the auctioneer steps up to the top of the mounting-block, while the clerk takes his place at the foot of it, and the farmers form a circle around them. There are the usual facetiæ.

"Now, gentlemen, you've got the chance of your lives this morning. John Corlett, I know you've come to buy up everything, so get your purse-strings loosened. Mr. Lace, thou knows a good beast if anybody

on the island does, and there are lashings of them here, I can tell thee."

The first animal to be led out by the guard into the circle of the spectators is a fine milch cow, five years old. Mona remembers that she gave forty pounds for it in the middle of the war. It is knocked down for twenty.

"What name?"

"John Corlett."

For a long half-hour there are scenes of the same kind. Every fresh beast put up is knocked down at half its value, and always, after the crack of the auctioneer's hammer, there comes the same name—"John Corlett."

At length Mona's anger becomes ungovernable. It is conspiracy, collusion! John Corlett has bought up all competitors! She rises from her seat by the fire with the intention of throwing up the window and shouting her protest. But while her hand is on the sash she sees Oskar at the other side of the barbed wire,

striding hastily away, and she returns to her seat.

The auction goes on for an hour longer. Mona does not look out again, but she hears everything that is said outside, every word, almost every whisper.

The farmers are beginning to laugh at the monotony of the proceedings. At length there is a murmur of conversation between the auctioneer and the Advocate, and the auctioneer says, "Very well, if you wish, sir," whereupon the Advocate raises his voice and cries:

"Gentlemen, this is going too far. If I hadn't announced that the sale would be without reserve I should stop it on my own responsibility. Come now, be Manxmen. What's doing on you anyway? Is it the war —or what? Men, we all knew old Robert Craine. He is dead. Let us be fair to his only daughter."

After that there is no more laughter, but there is less bidding and the results are the

same. The sale, which was expected to last until evening, is over by lunch-time.

"Gentlemen," says the auctioneer, "I thank you for your attendance. It's just as I expected—John Corlett has bought in all the stock on the farm."

"And much good may it do him," says the Advocate.

"I might have given her more for it without the auction, sir," says John Corlett.

"And so you might, or you should have been d—— well ashamed of yourself."

Then Mona hears the sound of trapesing feet on the avenue and the various voices of people passing under her window.

"Serve her right, though! We want no Huns settling here on the island."

"No, nor no good Manx money going over to Germany neither."

A moment later the Advocate comes into the house.

"I'm sorry the sale has not been as good

as we expected, miss. The total receipts will scarcely cover the valuation."

"Then there's nothing left for me—nothing whatever?"

"Nothing! I'm sorry, very sorry."

Mona, who had risen, sinks back into her seat as if stunned. After a while, the Advocate having gone, she hears the barking of dogs, the shouting of men, the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle. The stock are being driven back to the hill by the servants of their new owner.

At length there is silence. It is not at first that Mona is able to realize the full meaning of what has happened, but at last it falls on her. America is closed to her now. And that means that there is no place left to her in the world!

Oskar comes towards bed-time. He is biting his lips and his eyes are bloodshot. She looks up at him helplessly—all the strength of her soul has gone out of her.

"You've heard the result?"

"Yes, I have heard," he says, speaking between his teeth.

"I can't think how people could be so unkind."

"Unkind!"

He is laughing bitterly, fiercely.

"One's nearest neighbours—the people one has known all one's life."

"Oh, your people are no worse than any other—not an atom. People are the same everywhere. It's the war, Mona. It has drained every drop of humanity out of them."

He is laughing again, still more bitterly and fiercely.

"War! What a damned stupid, idiotic thing it is—and the people who make it! Patriots? Criminals, I call them! Crowned criminals and their mountebank crew conspiring against God and nature."

He smites the doorpost with his fist and says:

"But the war is not the worst by a long way."

"What is, Oskar?"

"This damnable peace that has followed it. People thought when the peace came they could go to sleep and forget. What fools! Think of it! Miserable old men spouting about a table, gambling in the fate of the young and the unborn; forgetting their loss in precious human lives, but wrangling about their reparations, about land, about money, which the little mother rocking her baby's cradle will have to pay the interest of in blood and tears some day; setting nation against nation; brewing a cauldron of hate which is hardening the hearts and poisoning the souls of men and women all the world over."

Mona, who has hardly heard what he has said, is still looking up at him helplessly.

"We couldn't help it, could we, Oskar?"

Oskar, recovering his self-command, pity-

struck and ashamed, lifts up her work-stained hands and puts them to his lips.

"Forgive me, Mona."

"We struggled hard, didn't we?"

"Yes."

"But since God had put it into our hearts we couldn't resist it, could we?"

"No."

"And now He doesn't seem to care, does He?"

"No! He doesn't seem to care," says Oskar. And then he goes off with head down.

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

It is the Saturday before Easter.

Looking out of her bedroom window in the morning, Mona sees nothing but a desolate black waste where the crowded compounds have been. Four unborn springs and summers buried in the bosom of the blackened fields—when, oh when will they grow green again?

Only in the Third Compound is there any activity. Few men are left even there. Oskar has told her he is to leave with the last batch, but the time for him to go is coming on inexorably.

The "houses" are empty, the "creatures" no longer call, and the unnatural silence of the farmyard oppresses her. As long as she had the work of three farm hands to do her strength never failed her, but now

that she has only to attend to herself she is always tired and weary.

The spring is beginning to appear, and through the open door she sees that the daffodils are blooming in the little patch of garden in front of the house. This reminds her of what she did on the day of her father's burial, and she plucks some of the flowers, intending to lay them on his grave.

There is nobody in the avenue when she walks through—between the lines of barbed-wire fences that have no faces behind them now—and past the empty guards' houses near to the gate. There is nobody on the road either, as far as to the lych-gate of Kirk Patrick.

There he lies, her father, his upright head-stone, inscribed to "Robert Craine of Knockaloe," cheek by jowl with the sloping marbles that mark the graves of the Germans who had died during the four years of internment—all his race-hatred quenched in the peace of death.

Only a few yards away, on the grass of a mound that had no stone over it, is the glass dome of artificial flowers which she herself had placed on the grave of Ludwig, the boy with the cough. The glass is cracked, no doubt by the snow and frost of winter, and the white flowers have perished. Poor father! Who knows but in a little while his dust may mingle with that of the German boy in the mother-bosom that bore them both! Oh God, how wicked is war, how cruel, how senseless!

Mona is coming out of the churchyard when she hears the tapping of a mason's chisel and then sees the mason himself behind a canvas screen, which shelters him from the winnowing of a light breeze that is blowing up from the sea. He is at work on a large block of granite, lettering a long list of names.

After a moment she speaks to him, and he tells her what the block is—the base of a cross to the men of the district who fell in

the war. It is to be set up outside the gate of the parish church at Peel. The ceremony of unveiling it is to be on Easter Monday—that is to say, the day after to-morrow. The time is to be nine in the morning, because that is the hour when the boys of Peel and Patrick who have survived the war are expected to return home by the steamer that is to leave Liverpool on Sunday night. The Lord Bishop of the Island is to unveil the memorial, and all the clergy and Town Commissioners and big people of the two parishes are to be present. All the men, too, and their mothers and wives and children.

"It will be a grand sight, girl. I suppose you won't be going, though?"

Mona catches her breath and answers:

"No."

After another moment she begins to look over the names. All four sides of the base are full of them, and the mason seems to be lettering the last. She tries to find her

brother's name and cannot do so. At length, not without an effort, she says:

"But where is Robbie's name?"

The mason pauses in his work, and then answers:

"Robbie Craine's? Well, to tell you the truth, it is not on the list they made out for me."

"They—who are they?"

"Well, the Bishop and the clergy and the Town Commissioner and so on."

"But my brother died in the war, and won the Victoria Cross, didn't he?"

"Maybe he did."

"You know he did. Then what has he done that his name is not in the list with the rest?"

The mason, preparing to resume his work, replies:

"Maybe it's what somebody else has done that has kept him out of it."

The word falls on her like a blow on the brain, and she goes off hurriedly. As she

turns the corner of the road she hears the thin ring of the mason's chisel, and it sounds like the thud of doom. Is she, and everybody who has ever belonged to her, to be wiped out of living memory? What has she done to deserve it? But after a moment of fierce anger her former helplessness comes back on her and she begins to cry.

"I can't tell in the world why good people should be so unkind."

Later in the day a new strength, the strength of defiance, comes over her. Oskar may say it is the war, and even the peace, that has poisoned people's souls, but if it was God who put it into her heart to love Oskar, and into Oskar's heart to love her, it is for God to see them through. He will, too—certainly He will. If she has to become a servant girl herself and scrub her fingers to the bone, why shouldn't she? God will open people's eyes some day, and then the

Bishop and the clergy and the Town Commissioners will have to be ashamed of themselves.

"I'm a good woman—why shouldn't they?"

Being without stock of her own now she has to go into town that evening to buy provisions for housekeeping. The shop-keepers show her scant courtesy, but she puts up with no neglect and no disrespect. It is almost dark when she has finished her shopping, and then, for a near cut back to Knockaloe, she passes, with her string bag in her hand, through a by-street which has an ale-house at one corner.

There she comes upon a tumultuous scene. In front of a small house, with the door standing open, a crowd of women and children have gathered to listen to a wild quarrel that is going on within. There is a man's voice swearing, a girl's voice screaming and an old woman's pleading.

"So this is what my maintenance from

the army has been spent on—keeping you and your . . . German bastard."

"It's not my fault, Harry; I tried to get another place and nobody would have me."

"Neither will I have you, so get out of this house quick."

"Leave me alone! Leave me alone, I tell you! If you touch my child I'll scratch your eyes out."

"Out you go, you harlot, and to . . . with you."

"Harry! Liza! Harry! Harry! Children!" cries the old woman.

Mona asks the women of the crowd what is going on.

"Don't you know, miss? It's Liza Kinnish, the girl with the German baby. Her brother has come home from the war, and he is turning her out—and no wonder."

A number of men, half-intoxicated, come from the ale-house, but they make no at-

tempt to intervene, and at the next moment a bare-headed soldier, also in drink, with the upper buttons of his tunic torn open, comes from the house, dragging after him a girl with a baby in her arms and her disordered hair streaming on to her shoulders.

"Out you go—you and your d—— German offal!"

Flinging the girl into the street, the man returns to the house and clashes the door behind him.

"Let me in!" screams the girl, hammering at the door with her spare hand.

The door opens and the soldier comes to the threshold.

"Look here, you . . . I'm not going to have the fellows sneering at me when they come home on Monday morning, so if you are not gone to . . . out of this inside two minutes . . ."

"Why did *you* come home?" cries the girl. "You beast! You brute! Why didn't the Germans kill you?"

At that the soldier, foaming at the mouth, is lifting his clenched fist to the girl when Mona, crushing through the crowd of women and throwing down her string bag, lifts her own hand and strikes the man full in the jaw, and he falls like a log.

Then, while he squirms on the ground, stunned and winded, she turns on the men from the ale-house, who have previously been drinking with him and taunting him and egging him on.

"And you!" she cries. "What *are* you? Are you *men*? You white-livered mongrels! Your mothers were *women*, and they'd be ashamed of you."

By this time the soldier has scrambled to his feet and, with blood in his mouth, he is trying to laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! So this is another of them, is it? She's in the same case herself, they're telling me. Oh, I've heard of you, my lady. You used to think great things of yourself,

but when the parson marries you there'll be three of you before him at the altar, as the saying is. Ha, ha, ha!"

The men laugh and some of the women begin to titter. A harder blow than she had dealt the soldier has fallen upon Mona. She stands for a moment as if turned to stone, then picks up her bag, sweeps through the crowd and hastens away.

So this is what people think of her! After all the struggling of her heart and the travailing of her soul, this is what people think! Oh, God! Oh, God!

She had been sleeping badly of late, but that night she hardly sleeps at all. Towards the grey dawning she has a sense of Robbie being in the room with her. He is wearing his officer's uniform, just as in her mind's eye, when she felt so proud, she had often seen him. She knows he is dead, and she thinks this is his spirit, and it has come to reproach her.

"Mona, if anybody had told me three

years ago that such a thing would happen I should have killed him. Yes, by God, I should have killed him."

Mona tries to speak, but cannot.

"Rob . . ."

"Lord, how proud I was of you! When they told me I had won the Victoria Cross I laughed and said, 'My sister would have won it long ago if she had been here.' Nobody hated the Germans as you used to do, but now that you've given yourself to one of them . . ."

"Rob . . . Rob . . ."

"What else could you have done it for? Everybody believes it, too. Father believed it, and it was that that killed him."

Again Mona tries to cry out and cannot.

"Hide yourself away, Mona. Hide your sin and shame in some miserable corner of the earth where nobody will know you. You've broken my heart, and now . . ."

"Robbie! Robbie!"

Her own voice awakens her. The rising sun shines on her as she sits up in bed in her wretchedness.

Only a dream! Yet it has told her everything. This is the end. Here has her road finally led her. Her love is doomed. Life, as well as the world, is now closed to her. But to stand in the pillory as long as she lives for a sin she has not committed—it is too much! Better die—a thousand times better!

When she asks herself how, it seems so simple. And when she thinks of the consequences they seem so slight. There will be nobody to care—nobody except Oskar. He will be better without her, and can go home when his time comes. Either of them could get on alone. It is only together that they are not allowed to live, and since only one of them can live, it is so much better it should be Oskar.

There is a pang in the thought that Oskar will suffer. Yes, he will be sorry. But he

will get over it. And when he is at home and the first pang of losing her is past and he wants to be happy, being so young and such a *man*, perhaps . . . who knows. . . .

But no, she cannot think of that.

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

EASTER DAY—one of the God-blest mornings in the sweet of the year when it is happiness enough to be alive.

Mona is setting her house in order and feeling as if she were doing everything for the last time. When she thinks she has finished she suddenly remembers that she has not had breakfast. But that does not matter now. How thirsty she is, though! So she brews herself a pot of tea and drinks two strong cups of it.

The church bells begin to ring, and she determines to go to church—also for the last time. Why not? It is true she intends to do something which good people would condemn, but it is no use thinking of that now.

How sweet the air outside is, with the odour of the violets and the gorse and with that tang of salt that comes up from the

sea! The young birds, too, how merrily they are singing! It is a pity! A great pity!

She is late. The bells have ceased to ring, and there is nobody on the road. It had taken her long to dress—she had felt so tired and had had to sit down so often.

The service has begun when she reaches the church. Through the inner door, which is half open, she can see the congregation on their knees and hear the vicar reading the General Confession, with the people repeating it after him. She cannot go in just now, so she stands by the porch and waits.

The Sunday-school children, kneeling together on the right of the pulpit, are bobbing their heads up and down at intervals—they are so happy and proud in their new Easter clothes. She, too, used to be proud and happy in her Easter clothes. It is almost heartbreaking. Life looks sweet now, death being at the door.

When the voices cease and she is about to enter, some of the congregation look

round at her. She feels as if they are thinking of her as the kind of woman-penitent who in the old days used to stand at the door of the church in her shame. That stops her, and she remains where she is standing.

The service goes on—the psalms and lessons and hymns appropriate to the day. At length comes the last hymn before the sermon:

"*Jesu, lover of my soul,*
Let me to thy bosom fly . . ."

Mona has known it all her life, yet it seems as if she had never understood it until now.

"*While the gathering waters roll,*
While the tempest still is high."

She is in tears before she is aware of it. The sermon begins, and the vicar's voice comes out to her in the open air and mingles with the twittering of the birds in the trees and the bleating of the lambs in the fields.

It is about the last days of Jesus—His

death and resurrection, the hatred of His enemies and the desertion of His friends—all the dreadful yet beautiful story.

"He might have avoided His death, but He did not do so. He died of His own free will. Why? Because He was confirmed in the belief that His death would save the world."

Jesus died to show that nothing mattered to man but the welfare of his soul. Riches did not matter, rank did not matter, poverty did not matter. It was nothing to Jesus that He was hated and despised and friendless and homeless and alone and cast out of the family of men. Nothing mattered to Him but love, and because He loved the world He died for it.

"And that is why all suffering souls come to Him—have been coming to Him through all the two thousand years since His pilgrimage here below—will continue to come to Him as long as the world lasts! '*Let me to thy bosom fly.*'"

Before the vicar's voice has ceased, and while he is pronouncing the blessing, Mona is hurrying home. There are no tears in her eyes now, and in her heart there is only a great exaltation.

Hitherto she has been thinking of what she intends to do as something that God would have to forgive her for. Not so now. If Jesus died of His own free will, if He died for love, why shouldn't she? And if by dying He saved the world, would it not be the same with her also?

In the dizzy whirl of her brain she can see no difference. What she intends to do ceases to be a sin and becomes a sacrifice. If the world is full of hatred, as the consequence of the war, her death may save it. She is only a poor girl, and nobody on earth may ever know what she has done and why she has done it, yet God will know.

But Oskar? She had not intended to tell Oskar. He loved her so much that he might have tried to dissuade her. Just to slip

away when the time came for him to go back to his own country—that had been her plan. But she could not reconcile herself to this now—not now, after this great new thought. Oskar must know everything.

Hours pass. She is sure Oskar will come to-day—quite sure. While waiting for him she drinks many cups of tea, forgetting that she has not eaten since yesterday. At last he comes. As usual, it is late at night, and she is so weak from emotion and want of food that she can scarcely reach the door to open it.

"May I come in?"

"Yes, indeed, come."

He steps into the house, never having done so since the night of her father's seizure, and sits by her side before the fire. His face is lividly white, his lips are twitching, and his voice is hoarse.

"What's to do with you, Oskar?"

"Nothing. Don't be afraid. I have come to tell you something."

"What?"

"I've just had my orders. I am to go away in the morning."

"In the morning?"

"Yes, with the last batch. The last of the officers and guard are going too, so the camp will be empty after to-morrow."

Mona's heart is beating hard, and she tries to ease it by asking an irrelevant question.

"What are the men saying?"

He laughs bitterly, and his words spurt out of his mouth.

"The men? Oh, they're saying they'll soon be here again. They want to stay in England, and if they are to be sent back to their own overburdened country, to suffer and to starve, they will return some day with hatred in their hearts."

"That means another war some day, doesn't it?"

"It does, and when that day comes God

help the poor old world and everything in it."

In her excited mood Mona thinks she knows better, but she cannot speak of that yet; and Oskar, too, as if trying to gain time, goes on talking.

"The world had its great chance at the end of the war, Mona, but then came those damnable old men with their conferences making a peace that was worse than the war itself. And now the churches—look at the churches who have been told to teach that there's no peace under the soldier's sword, standing by while the world is rushing on to destruction! What snares! What hypocrisy! What spiritual harlotry! Why don't they burn down their altars and shut their doors and be honest? . . . But that is not what I came to say—to tell you."

"What is, Oskar?"

He hesitates for a moment, and then in a flood of words he says:

"I don't want to frighten you, Mona.

You must not let me frighten you. I should never forgive myself if . . . But you are all I have now, and . . . I can't go away and leave you behind me. . . . I simply can't. . . . It's impossible, quite impossible."

"But if they force you, Oskar?"

Oskar laughs again—it is wild laughter.

"Force me? Nobody can be forced if only he has courage."

"Courage?"

"Yes, courage. . . . Don't you see what I've come to tell you, Mona? Come, don't you? When the idea came to me first I thought you might be afraid and perhaps faint and even try to turn me from my purpose, so I made up my mind to say nothing. But when the order came to-night I said to myself, 'No, she's not like some women. She's brave; she'll see there's nothing else for it.'"

Mona sees what is coming, and her heart is throbbing hard, but she says:

"Tell me. It's better that I should know, Oskar."

With that he gets closer to her and speaks in a whisper, as if afraid the very walls may hear:

"When they look for me in the morning I shall be gone. . . . Don't you understand me now?—gone! So I've come to-night to say farewell. We are meeting for the last time, Mona."

He looks at her, thinking she will cry out, perhaps scream, but her eyes are shining. All the pain in the thought of their parting has passed away with a mighty rushing.

"Oskar," she says, "don't you think it would be just as hard for me . . . to stay here after you were . . . gone?"

The tears are in Oskar's eyes now, for flesh is weak and his wild heart is softening.

"What would become of me without you, Oskar?"

"Don't say that, Mona."

"But if . . . if it's inevitable that you

should go, if there is nothing else for it, can't we . . . can't we go *together?*"

"Together?" He is looking searchingly into her shining face. "Do you mean . . .?"

She takes his hand. It is trembling. Her own is trembling also.

"Oskar, do you remember the fight of the bulls on the cliff-head?"

"When the old ones wouldn't let the young one live, and he had to . . ."

She bows her head. He is breathing rapidly. She lifts her eyes and looks at him. They are silent for a moment, then he says:

"My God, Mona! Do you mean *that?* . . . Really mean it?"

"Yes."

And then she tells him everything—all her great, divine, delirious project.

He gasps, and then his face also shines, as little by little her dream rises before them.

"Do you think that vain and foolish, Oskar . . . that we should do as He did, of

our own free will, to save the world from all this hatred and bitterness?"

Oskar throws up his head; his eyes are streaming.

"No! No! For God's in His heaven, Mona."

And then, these two poor creatures whom the world has cast out, clasped hand in hand, and seeing no difference in the wild confusion and delirium of their whirling thoughts, talk together in whispers of how they are going to save the world from war, and the bitter results of war, by doing as He did who was the great Vanquisher of death and Redeemer of the soul from sin—give up their lives in love and sacrifice.

"So even if the churches are all you say, there's Jesus still. . . ."

"Yes, yes, there's Jesus still, Mona."

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

At five o'clock next morning a young man and a young woman are climbing the hill that stands between the camp and the sea.

There is only a pale grey light in the sky; the last stars are dying out; the morning is very quiet. Sometimes a cock crows in the closed-up hen houses of the neighbouring farms; sometimes a dog barks through the half-darkness. Save for these there is no sound except that of the soft breeze which passes over the earth before daybreak.

The two walk side by side. They can hardly see each other's faces, and are holding hands to keep together. Partly because of the darkness and partly for reasons obscure even to themselves, they are walking slowly,

and pausing at every few steps to take breath. They are trying to make their journey as long as possible. It is to be their last.

"Forgive me, Oskar," says Mona.

"There is nothing to forgive, Mona. It had to be."

"Yes, it had to be. There was no other way, was there?"

"No, there was no other way, Mona."

What remained of the internment camp had not been stirring when they passed through the lane that led from the farm to the grazing land, but by the time they are half-way up the hill there are sounds from the black ground below them. Looking back, they see groups of vague figures moving about in the Third Compound. A little later they hear the call of a bugle—the last batch of prisoners is being gathered up. Still later, when the light is better, there is the sharp ringing of a bell—the roll has been called and Oskar is missing.

"It's for me," he says, and they stop.

By this time they are near to the wall of the little cemetery that surrounds the tower, and to avoid being seen they wait under its dark shelter.

There is a period of suspense in which neither speaks, but after a while they see the black-coated prisoners form into file, with their yellow-clothed guard on either side, and march out of their compound.

"They've given me up," says Oskar, and they both breathe freely.

They hear the word of command, deadened by distance. Then they see the procession of men pass down the avenue and through the big outer gates into the high road. At first there is only the dull thud of many feet on the hard ground, but as the guards close the gates behind them, and the sharp clang of the iron hasps comes up through the still air, the prisoners break into a cheer.

It is wild, broken, irregular cheering, as

of fierce disdain, and it is followed by defiant singing—

"*Glo-ry to the brave men of old,*
Their sons will copy their virtues bold,
Courage in heart and a sword in hand . . ."

A few minutes later the dark figures are hidden by trees, and as they turn the corner of the road by Kirk Patrick their voices die away.

They are gone—back to their own country, which wants them not. The camp that has been their prison for four years is empty. It lies, in the quickening daylight, like a vast black scar on the green face of the mountain.

Suddenly a new thought comes to Mona. They may still avoid death. Life may yet be open to them.

"Oskar," she says, speaking in a rapid whisper, "now that the officers and the guard have gone, isn't it possible that we could escape to somewhere . . . where we should be unknown . . ."

"Impossible! Quite impossible, Mona."

"Ah yes, I suppose it is," she says, and they rise to resume their journey.

But just then, in the first rays of morning, from a cottage that is between them and the sea, she hears the voice of a woman singing. She knows who the woman is—one of her former maids, who has lately been married to a farm labourer. Perhaps her husband has gone to his work in the fields, and she is out in their little garden, gathering up the eggs of the hens that are clucking. How happy she must be!

For a moment Mona's heart fails her. She forgets the great thoughts of yesterday, and regrets the loss of the simple joys that are reserved for other women.

"It seems a pity, though, doesn't it?" she says.

"Do you regret it, Mona?" says Oskar, looking round at her. But at the next moment her soul has regained its strength.

"No! Oh, no! It had to be. . . . And

then there is our great hope, our wonderful idea!"

"Yes, our great hope, our wonderful idea."

They continue their climbing, still holding each other's hands, but rarely speaking. Sometimes she stumbles, but he holds her up. The larks are singing now, and the young lambs on John Corlett's farm are bleating. Far down, on the seaward side, sheltering in the arms of its red cliffs, is the little white town of Peel. It is beginning to smoke for breakfast.

"Oskar, do you still think that when all this is over, and the hatred and bitterness have died out of people's hearts, they will make war on each other no longer?"

"Yes, in the years to come, perhaps—or they must wipe themselves off the earth, Mona."

"And do you think that God will accept our sacrifice?"

"I'm sure He will—because we shall have died for love and given up all."

"Yes, we shall have died for love and given up all," says Mona, and after that she liberates her hand and walks on firmly.

As they approach the crest of the hill the deep murmur of the sea comes over to them, and when they reach the top its salt breath smites their faces. There it lies in a broad half-circle, stretching from east to west, cold and grey and cruel.

Mona trembles, and the revulsion which comes to the strongest souls at the first sight of death seizes her for an instant. In a faltering voice she says:

"It won't be long, will it, Oskar?"

"No, it won't be long, Mona."

"Only a few moments?"

"Yes, only a few moments."

"And then we shall be together again for ever?"

"For ever."

"Oh, I shan't care if at the cost of a few

moments of suffering I can be happy with you for ever."

She is not afraid now. In front of them are the heather-clad slopes that go down to the precipitous cliffs. They clasp hands again and walk forward. Tears are in their eyes, but the light of heaven is there also.

In a few minutes more they are on the cliff head. It overhangs the sea, which is heaving and singing in its many voices, seventy feet below. The sun is rising, and the sky to the east is flecked with crimson. There is nothing else in sight anywhere, and no other sound except the cry of the sea fowl on the rocks beneath.

"This is the place, isn't it?"

"This is the place, Mona."

"Shall we do as we intended?"

"Yes, let us do as we intended."

And then these two children of the universal Father, cast out of the company of men, separated in life and about to be united

in death, go through the burial service which they have appointed for themselves.

First, they kneel on the cliff edge, as close as they can get to it, and repeat their prayer:

"*Our Father, who art in Heaven . . .*
Geheiligt wird dein name . . .
Forgive us our trespasses . . .
As we forgive them that trespass against us . . ."

Then they rise, and, standing hand in hand, with their heads up and their faces to the sea, they sing their hymn:

"*Jesu, lover of my soul . . .*
Lass mir an dein brust liegen . . ."

Then Oskar unfastens his coat, and taking off the long belt he is wearing he straps it about both of them. They are now eye to eye, breast to breast, heart to heart.

"The time has come, hasn't it, Oskar?"

"Yes, the time has come, Mona."

"I can kiss you now, can't I?"

He puts his arms tenderly about her and kisses her on the lips. She kisses him. It is their first kiss and their last.

"God bless you for loving me, Oskar."

"And God bless you, too, Mona. And now good-bye!"

"No, not good-bye. Only—until then."

"Until then."

The sun rises above the horizon in a blaze of glory. The broad sea sings her everlasting song. The cliff head is empty.

After a while, when the sky is blue and the morning sunlight is dancing on the waters, a steamer, decked with flags from stem to stern, comes round the headland on the south. It is crowded with soldiers, who are crushing to starboard to catch their first sight of the town which lies behind the headland to the north.

There is the sharp crack of a rocket from the lifeboat house at Peel, and then a band

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on the steamer begins to play, and the soldiers to sing in rapturous chorus :

"*Keep the home-fires burning . . .*
Till the boys come home . . ."

A little later the church bells begin to ring. They ring louder and louder and faster and faster every moment, as if pealing their joyous message up to the cloudless sky :

"PEACE! PEACE! PEACE!"

CONCLUSION

QUEENSTOWN, *April*, 1919.—*Rather more than a week ago the bodies of a young man and a young woman, tightly strapped together, closely clasped in each other's arms, and floating out towards the ocean, were picked up by Kinsale fishermen as they were returning to harbour in the early hours of morning. Inquiries into identity appear to show that the young man was a German of good family and superior education, who, until recently, was a prisoner at Knockaloe, the well-known internment camp for alien civilians in the Isle of Man, and that the young woman was a native of the island, a girl of fine character, the owner of a farm which is connected with the camp and called by the same name.*

It is known that, in spite of the difference of race and notwithstanding the difficulties of their position, they became strongly attached,

and that when, shortly after the Armistice, the order was given that prisoners of war should be returned to the countries of their origin, the young German tried, first, to remain in England with the girl, whom he wished to marry, and afterwards to be allowed to take her back with him to Germany. Failing in both efforts, he fell into a deep melancholy, which seems to have communicated itself to the young woman, and to have resulted in a death-pact.

When the time came for the camp to be closed the young man had disappeared, and later it was discovered that the young woman was also missing. How they escaped is unknown, but it is assumed that they threw themselves into the sea from the cliffs of Contrary, the most westerly headland in Man, and, being caught in the Gulf Stream, which flows close to the island at that point, were carried down to the waters in which they were found.

The mackerel fishers of Kinsale (simple, but imaginative and often religious men, belonging to many nationalities—Irish, Scotch, French, and even German) have been deeply touched by the fate of the young lovers who, finding their

love doomed by the hatred between their races, and nothing left to them in life, preferred death to separation. A few days ago they asked permission to bury the bodies, and yesterday they did so, choosing as the place of rest the summit of Cape Clear, which looks out on the Atlantic. To-day they have built over the spot a broad and lofty cairn, which will henceforth be the first thing seen by the passengers on the great liners who are coming in from the New World to the Old, and the last by those who are going out from the Old World to the New.— The Times.

"*Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave. . . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.*"

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